

JESUS' SECOND COMING

By Patrick Swayne

INTRODUCTION

“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 14:3). For nearly two thousand years, Christians have been eagerly waiting for this promise of Christ to be fulfilled – for Christ to come again and usher His faithful into an eternal home. A quick look at any modern day hymnal used by the Lord’s church will reveal just how eagerly Christians are looking for their coming Saviour – mentioned more times than perhaps any other subject in these hymnals is the subject of heaven. Rarely does a Sunday go by when God’s people do not at least mention the bright and blessed home of the soul; with each of these mentions credence is given to the idea that the Lord Jesus will come again.

When compared with the great expectation Christians have for the Second Coming of Christ, the information presented by the Bible on this subject is relatively sparse. One could easily sit down and within a few hours read all that the Bible says on eternity and the advent that will usher it in. Because of the disparity between expectation and information, some have tried to fill in the space between the two and in so doing have added to God’s word, something which God strictly forbids (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Revelation 22:18, 19). Others have prayed upon people’s ignorance of the subject, twisting the scriptures to teach what God never intended and by so doing leading themselves and those who believe them to destruction (2 Peter 3:16, 17). Others still try to sway Christians from their faith and teach that the idea of a Second Coming, a judgment, and an eternal destination of the soul is a foolish dream of foolish dreamers – not understanding that since God has once exerted His power over the earth He can easily do it again (2 Peter 3:3-12).

Clearly God wants His people to think about the Second Coming, for He has indeed spoken on the subject in scripture. All scripture is both profitable and necessary to make Christians complete (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:3). Clearly much motivation can be derived from a proper understanding of the Second Coming, for it was in light of the Second Coming that Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled,” and Paul added, “To you who are troubled, rest with us” (John 14:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). Against what false doctrines must Christians prepare themselves? What should Christians be teaching and preaching concerning Christ’s Second Coming? How should an understanding of the Second Coming affect a Christian’s daily living? This paper will seek to answer these questions while examining the Second Coming of Christ.

WHAT THE WORLD SAYS ABOUT THE SECOND COMING

Some deny the reality of the Second Coming. In the world one can find everything from atheists to allegorists. The former abjectly deny any notion of a resurrection, let alone a return of Jesus Christ. The latter state that the Second Coming of Christ is not to be taken literally, but has reference to some other spiritual truth or was taught to encourage behaviour in those weak in the faith. Between these two extremes are the many so-called Christians that state, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,” (2 Peter 3:10) but live as though He is, hypocritically teaching the coming of the Lord but living as though it will not happen. Truly, to live in contradiction to the commands of Christ is to deny the reality of the Second Coming. However, it will be proven that if the Bible is true, then a literal Second Coming of Christ must equally be true.

Some defy the plain teaching of scripture about His coming and assert that they know when it will happen. Volumes have been written by men claiming that they have “unlocked the code,” boldly averring not only that God has revealed when Christ will return

but that they know when. Often, these false teachers take highly figurative passages and interpret them literally. This author once had a discussion with a woman who believed that the Hebrew alphabet contained a code, each letter representing a word (conveniently enough, an English word); thus, Hebrew words were like acronyms. Needless to say, these acronyms revealed the future to this misguided woman, including things concerning the end of time. The problem with those who claim they know when Christ will return is that their predictions do not come true. The Lord says of these, “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:22). It will be seen that no one can know exactly when the Lord will return.

Some design elaborate doctrines indicating that Christ has already returned. A great controversy that has swept through Australia in years past and is now somehow enjoying resurgence in Malaysia is the A.D. 70 doctrine, sometimes known as, “Realised Eschatology” (eschatology being the study of final things, or things pertaining to the end of the world, etc.). This doctrine amazingly claims that all statements of Bible prophecy were fulfilled almost 2000 years ago in A.D. 70. In short, Christ has returned, the world has ended, and we are now living in either heaven or hell. This unfortunately represents just one brand of this kind of teaching – some, like those of the Baha’i faith, believe that Christ has returned in the form of a “spirit reincarnation.” To these, the spirit of Jesus has returned and will continue to return, with each reincarnation revealing a new and progressive truth. As will be seen, any teaching that states that Christ has already returned denies what plain scripture teaches about that return.

Some describe a Second Coming that will usher in a physical, earthly kingdom. From the very moment John the Immerser began to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). What violence could the kingdom of heaven suffer, and how might the violent take it by force? Following the word “force,” one is taken to a time in Jesus’ life when 5,000 men desired to “come and take him [that is, Jesus - PWS] by force, to make him a king” (John 6:15). Yes, the kingdom of heaven has since the time of John suffered violence at the hands of men who would turn the spiritual into the physical and the heavenly into the worldly. These men envision a Messiah like the Jews of old desired – not a spiritual Saviour, but a carnal King.

Doctrines abound that teach that Christ will return to the earth to begin an earthly kingdom. The most prevalent of these is Premillennialism, a doctrine that states that Christ came to this earth to set up an earthly kingdom but was rejected by the Jews. It therefore promises that there will be a “Rapture” (a “first” Second Coming of Christ in which Christ will come in the clouds to take the faithful from the earth), after which there will be a seven year span during which the man of sin will be revealed and usher in a great tribulation for those converted to Christ after the Rapture. After this seven year span, Christ will return, fight the forces of Satan in the valley of Megiddo, and usher in a 1000 year reign from Jerusalem, thus finally setting up His kingdom in the truest sense. Amazingly, nearly all denominationalists believe this fanciful doctrine to some degree.

All who teach that Christ will return to usher in a physical, earthly kingdom would do well to listen to and mark the words of Jesus before the Pharisees: “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20, 21). If not satisfied with these, they should consult Christ’s later statement to Pilot: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). If not satisfied with these, maybe the words of Paul would suffice, who told the Colossians they had been “translated [...] into the

kingdom of His dear Son” – an existing, Spiritual kingdom known as the church (Colossians 1:13).

Evidence could be multiplied along these lines, but it is clear from the above passages that Christ never intended to create a physical, earthly kingdom (and would not have failed to do so had He attempted it when He first came to this earth). Instead, it is clear that Christ succeeded in creating a spiritual kingdom, the church (Matthew 16:16-19). When Jesus comes again, it will be to deliver up the kingdom and end His reign, not to establish the kingdom and begin His reign (1 Corinthians 15:23-25).

Other false teachings may exist in regards to the Second Coming of Christ, for as one brother put it, “There is no end to what people will believe as long as it is not in the Bible.” While Christians ought to be aware of these doctrines so they are not led astray by those men who would creep in unawares (Jude 1:4), what will do Christians better than a knowledge of what is false is a knowledge of what is true.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE SECOND COMING

Jesus will come again. If the scriptures are in fact from God, then there can be little doubt as to the fact that Jesus Christ bodily will come again to this earth. Paul states that one of the pillars of the Christian faith is the fact of the Resurrection – in fact, without a resurrection, Paul states, “then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:13-14). The resurrection that he speaks of there is a literal and bodily resurrection, observed by many witnesses (v. 3-8). In that same context, Paul states, “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:21-23).

Consider the above passage carefully. Was Jesus literally resurrected? Yes, He was. Do all literally die in Adam (following Adam's choice for sin)? Yes, they do (Romans 5:12; 6:23). Will all literally be made alive in Christ? Yes, they will (Romans 5:15-21; 6:23). When will this literally happen? According to the text, at Christ's literal Second Coming! If everything else in the passage is literal, how could the coming of Christ be anything but literal? The truth is Jesus will come again – not figuratively or in the form of a spirit reincarnation, but in body: “Every eye shall see Him” (Revelation 1:7). The apostles were told, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Jesus will come again at a time unknown to man. Peter described the Second Coming of Jesus in terms that showed it to be a sudden and unexpected event: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (2 Peter 3:10). How exactly does a thief come in the night? Does he announce his coming with many signs and portents? Does he knock on the door and say, “Attention homeowners, I'm going to break into your house at 3:47AM, OK?” Or, does he simply come? The answer should be obvious to anyone who has ever had their home invaded by a thief – the thief simply comes, and gives as little warning as possible. Likewise, Jesus will simply come. He said in this regard, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matthew 24:42). He continued, “Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (v. 44).

Much confusion concerning the coming of Jesus arises out of misconceptions of Jesus' statements recorded in Matthew 24-25. Some forget or do not know that in that chapter Jesus is answering two distinct questions (though the askers thought they were interrelated) – one pertaining to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and another pertaining to the end of the world (v. 1-3). Jesus was very clear to divide these subjects with this statement: “Verily I say unto you, **this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled**” (v.

34). In other words, as one studies Matthew 24, one should look at the first 34 verses with an understanding that Jesus promised that everything said up until that point would happen before everyone in the generation to whom Jesus was speaking had passed away. In fact, those prophetic statements prior to verse 34 – all of them – were fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the temple was destroyed along with the rest of Jerusalem. However, as one looks at the verses after verse 34 (including chapter 25), one should realize that these statements have not been fulfilled already and could not have been fulfilled already, inasmuch as the judgment has not yet occurred (25:31-46).

Useful to a proper understanding of Matthew 24 is the below chart. The information was taken primarily from brother Curtis Cates’ book, The A.D. 70 Theology (Olive Branch, MS: Cates Publications, 1995), in which brother Cates cites the influence of Frank D. Young in his own compiling of it. The below chart is an adaptation of that information; it has been expanded and edited to include a few more points and scripture references. Compare the statements before verse 34 (those pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem) to those after verse 34 (those pertaining to the Second Coming).

The Destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70 – Matthew 24:4-34)	The Second Coming (Date Unknown – Matthew 24:36-25:46)
The Jews and Palestine locally would be affected (24:16)	Every person who ever lived will be affected (25:32)
There would be time to flee to the mountains for escape (24:16)	There will be no time for escape, and besides, the mountains shall be dissolved (24:39-41; cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12)
To escape, the inhabitants of Judea would have to make haste (24:16-20)	Making haste will be inappropriate, impossible, and useless (24:39-41)
The circumstances prior to the destruction of Jerusalem created alarm among those affected (24:6-8)	Life will be continuing as per normal when the Second Coming occurs (24:39-41)
The Sabbath was still being kept by the Jews (24:20)	Sabbath keeping will long have ceased (cf. Hebrews 8:13; the Law of Moses has vanished away in that it has not been properly kept by anyone since the temple’s destruction in A.D. 70)
The shortening of the days would help save Christians (24:22)	No one would benefit from a shortening of the days (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:23-24; the moment Christ comes will mark the end of time)
Christ was not present, nor was He visible; thus, imposters could claim to be Christ (Matthew 24:5, 23-24)	Christ will be personally, visibly, literally present, seen by everyone, thus it would be folly for someone to try to imitate Him (25:31-32; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 1:7).
A great persecution would precede the destruction (Matthew 24:9, 21)	No exceptional tribulation is described as directly preceding the second appearing of Christ – but final, eternal punishment is said to come after (24:51; 25:30, 46).
Clear signs would indicate the time (24:6-15; compare v. 14 with Colossians 1:23)	There shall be no signs, but Christ shall come as a thief (24:42-44)

The Roman army would march into Jerusalem/ the temple (24:15; cf. Luke 21:20)	There is no longer a Roman empire, and physical Jerusalem is no longer holy (cf. Galatians 4:21-31).
The Lord knew when Jerusalem would be destroyed (24:34)	The Lord did not know the time when He would return personally; thus, no signs were given (24:36)
These events would take place in that generation (24:34)	No one on earth knows when the second appearing will take place (24:36)
The sign of Christ would appear and be the only means by which Christ would appear (Matthew 24:29-30)	Christ Himself will personally, literally appear (24:42, 50; 25:19, 31)
The time of the destruction of Jerusalem is described as “those days” (24:19, 22, 29)	The time of the Second Coming is described as “that day” (24:36)
After the destruction of Jerusalem, the gospel would be preached (24:31)	After Christ’s personal return, the day of gospel preaching will be over (25:31-33; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10)
The parable of the fig tree illustrated these events (24:32-33)	The coming of a thief and the unexpected return of a master illustrated the Second Coming (24:42-51)
These events happened on earth (24:4-34)	No events following Christ’s Second Coming are said to occur on earth; it will cease to exist (25:31-46; cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12)

It is clear that Jesus will come again at a time unknown to man. Only one sign was given in regards to the Second Coming of Jesus:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to give an extensive exegesis of this passage, a couple of interpretations will be offered. Key to understanding any difficult passage is to examine the scriptures surrounding it. Paul is quick to point out to the Thessalonians (perhaps by way of warning) that “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (v. 7). Whatever or whoever this man of sin was, his/their work away from the faith and towards setting up another faith had already begun when Paul was writing. Some believe therefore that this prophecy represents in a very general way the heresy of Gnosticism, which was definitely already at work. Others pin the passage down more concretely, stating that Gnosticism would eventually give birth to Catholicism and that the man of sin closely resembles the position of Pope. It can safely be said that one of these interpretations is correct, or perhaps a combination of both.

It must be remembered that Paul gave the prophecy of the man of sin to the Thessalonians because they believed Jesus was coming imminently. From what is recorded in chapter 3, it seems as though some of the Thessalonians were so preoccupied with the Second Coming of Christ, that they quit their jobs. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write the prophecy to encourage the Thessalonians and persuade them that they could and should continue with their lives as normal: “That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand” (v. 2). The prophecy therefore was not intended to be a “sign of the end times” or the imminent coming of the Lord. 2 Thessalonians 2 does not trump what Jesus said previously:

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matthew 24:36-39).

Jesus made it crystal clear – no one will have any special insight as to when He will return. The fulfilment of 2 Thessalonians 2 does not mean that Jesus will of necessity come soon; it simply means that we are living in a period in which He could come, whereas the Thessalonians (prior to the fulfilment of the prophecy) were living in a period in which He (according to the prophecy) would not.

No signs will immediately, or, beyond the prophecy mentioned above, remotely precede his coming and no advance warning will be given save a mighty shout and the sound of the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Thus, no man can say he knows when Christ will come and any man who says he does know or that Christ has already come is easily identifiable as a false teacher. All false teachers should be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10).

Jesus will come again both in the clouds and in a very obvious and unmistakable fashion. John said of His coming, “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him” (Revelation 1:7). As mentioned previously, when He comes with the clouds He will also come “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Though the text clearly says that every eye will see Him, one can only assume the obviousness of His coming will be amplified by Christ’s promise to bring “all the holy angels with Him” (Matthew 25:31). Not only will Christ’s coming be obvious enough for every eye to see, the effect it will have on the earth will also be obvious (2 Peter 3:10). Any teaching that Christ will come secretly, revealing Himself only to a select few or only taking with Him His chosen in a mysterious “Rapture” is clearly false.

When Jesus comes again, He will bring the souls of the departed faithful with Him. The brethren at Thessalonica had a very common fear, but had it for a strange reason. They were afraid of dying – not because they were afraid of what happened after, but because they were afraid that nothing happened after! They apparently did not understand the resurrection, and believed that if they died before Christ came they would never see Him or be with Him. To these Paul said,

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14).

The resurrection of Jesus is in one way a promise that all will be resurrected; Jesus is simply the “firstfruits” of the resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Those asleep in Jesus will have the first privileges of Christ’s coming, being called by Him out of the grave (1 Thessalonians 4:15; “prevent” in the KJV should read, “precede”; John 5:28-29).

What about those who have died outside of Christ? There is no promise for them to enjoy at Christ’s Second Coming like the departed faithful – they will not be called by Him when He comes in the clouds. Yet, the Bible is clear that the faithless will be resurrected; there will be no “soul sleeping” or “annihilation.” Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28, 29). How terrible and sad a fate to be resurrected to life again, to see Christ in the clouds, but not to be called to be with Him and instead face eternal death (Revelation 20:12-15).

When Jesus comes again, the bodies of the living and the resurrected dead will be translated from physical forms to spiritual forms. Paul declared, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). Paul had already stated that, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 50) – in other words, that our human bodies are not fit for eternal life (or eternal damnation). So when Christ comes again (“at the last trump,” cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16), our bodies will be changed from physical bodies to spiritual bodies. We will be “as the angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30). What will these new bodies be like? It is impossible to say for sure. But it can be said of the physical body, “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

When Jesus comes again, the material heavens and earth will cease to exist. As alluded to before, the earth will totally be destroyed when Christ returns. Peter stated that, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). He added in the following verse, “All these things shall be dissolved” (v. 11). The destruction of the earth therefore is not a renovation or a simple re-creation of the now existing world. Some teach that man will spend a thousand years on this earth after Christ’s coming and some teach eternity on earth. In light of the scriptures, any teaching that states any length of time on this earth after Christ’s coming is false. When Christ comes, the faithful will leave this earth to return no more: They “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” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Instead of looking to an old earth or a newly renovated earth, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

When Jesus comes again, all will appear before His judgment seat. Paul said, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). A separation is spoken of as happening after the dead are resurrected – some are resurrected to death and others to life (John 5:28, 29). This separation takes place at the judgment seat of Christ, apparently after Jesus’ Second Coming:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, **then** shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left (Matthew 25:31-33).

There will be no stages to Christ’s coming as the Rapturists teach – no “first” Second Coming in the clouds and then “second” Second Coming to the earth. There will also be no probationary period and no second chances. The coming of Christ will be sudden, but final. It will mark the beginning of judgment at which sentences will be pronounced. Those found in the Lamb’s book of life will enter into the Holy City; those not in that book will have nowhere to go but the Second Death (Revelation 20:12-15; 21:27). For those in Christ, the coming of Christ will be the beginning of eternal blessing; for those outside, the beginning of eternal vengeance and damnation.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not 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 (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN LIGHT OF THE SECOND COMING

We must not be ignorant. Paul said to the Thessalonians, “I would not have you ignorant, brethren,” in regards to the Second Coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It cannot be emphasized enough that a great deal of false teaching surrounds the Second Coming of Christ. False teaching is neither harmless nor innocuous; it stems from the lies of the father of lies – Satan – and will result in that murderer killing both the soul teaching the false doctrine and any who believe it (John 8:44; 2 John 1:9; 2 Peter 3:16; et al). The doctrines mentioned before deny the truth of God’s word as well undermine the influence of Christ and His kingdom. Against these doctrines and all false doctrines, Christians must be equipped with the sword of the Spirit, God’s word (Ephesians 6:17). They must create in themselves a faith based on the word of God and not on the word of men (Hebrews 11:1, 6; 1 Corinthians 4:6).

We must be prepared. Between the description of the Second Coming recorded at the end of Matthew 24 and the description of the judgment recorded at the end of Matthew 25 are two parables that teach what one must do in light of the Second Coming and the Judgment that follows. The first is the parable of the foolish and wise virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). In this parable, foolish virgins were separated by the Lord from their wise counterparts according to their degree of preparation – the wise adequately prepared while the foolish inadequately prepared. The Lord taught this to encourage all individuals to prepare themselves in light of the Second Coming – to make themselves ready.

But how can one make himself ready? The only way to ensure preparation is through performance. The next parable involves three servants to whom a master delivered talents (sums of money), trusting each servant to make the most of what they were given while the master was away on a journey (Matthew 25:14-30). The servants that were rewarded upon the master’s return were those who had performed while the one that hid the money given to him was rebuked and cast out of the master’s presence. The talent in the parable represents the sum total of a person’s opportunities in life (money, abilities, health, etc.). The Lord does not give individuals equal opportunities, giving “to every man according to his several ability” (v. 15). However, he does hold them accountable for whatever they are given (Luke 12:48).

A key to being prepared for the Second Coming involves being properly dressed. Christ sometimes compared His kingdom to a feast. In one parable in which He was making this comparison, He states that there was one man who came being improperly dressed. Consider what happens to this man, noting that the Lord makes an immediate application to the Second Coming and judgment:

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 22:11-13).

What are the right clothes for the Second Coming? Of course, the right clothes are not physical ones (though it would be wise to dress modestly in light of the Second Coming – 1 Timothy 2:9). Isaiah described the clothes as follows: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10). Isaiah lived under the law of Moses - how does one get these clothes in the New Testament era? Paul says that “all spiritual blessings” – including salvation and righteousness – are “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). How does one put on Christ? “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26, 27).

Faith (which comes from God's word – Romans 10:17) leads one to baptism which places one in Christ – the proper “clothing” for the Second Coming.

It must be noted that preparation does not end at baptism. In fact, preparation does not even end when one faithfully attends worship services, as many seem to think it does. It can truly be said that worship does not make a person right with God but instead is the privilege of a person who is right with God. While both obedience to the gospel and worship in spirit and in truth are necessary in regards to preparation (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Romans 6:17; John 4:23-24), what really makes or breaks one's preparation is one's daily actions. Note the things that Jesus brought against the unfaithful in His picture of the judgment scene:

Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not (Matthew 25:41-43).

The Lord wants to find His servants working as servants to their fellow man – He wants to find them living the Christian life on a daily basis. Jesus gave this command to His servants: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately” (Luke 12:35-36).

We must prepare others. Contemplating the fiery coming of the Lord and the final judgment, Paul said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11). Christians must not be satisfied only with self preservation. It is clear that in order to preserve one's self, one must prepare one's self; a major part of preparation is living a life of service. What better service could a Christian offer to the world than to persuade others to become Christians themselves? Considering again the judgment scene and what Christ mentioned, what better meat could a Christian give someone than the bread of life (John 6:35)? What better drink than the water of eternal life (John 4:14; Revelation 22:17)? What better hospitality than that provided in the family of God (Acts 2:42-47)? What better medicine than the balm of Gilead and what better physician than the great Physician (Jeremiah 8:22; Matthew 9:12, 13)? What better visitation than to grant one release from the spiritual prison of sin (Romans 6:17)? True preparation for the Second Coming involves teaching others and helping them to prepare themselves.

CONCLUSION

The Second Coming of Christ ought not to strike terror in the hearts of those who are faithful. Instead, it should give them comfort and hope:

- “**Let not your heart be troubled** [...] I will come again” (John 14:1-3).
- “Therefore [in light of the Second Coming and resurrection, PWS], my beloved brethren, **be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that **your labour is not in vain** in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also **we look for the Saviour**, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Philippians 3:20, 21).
- “**Set your affection on things above**, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:2-4).
- “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, **that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope**. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring

with him [...] Wherefore **comfort one another with these words.**” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

- “And **to you who are troubled rest with us**, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (2 Thessalonians 1:7).
- “**Be patient** therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord” (James 5:7).
- “Wherefore **gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end** for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).
- “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, **Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God**” (2 Peter 3:11, 12).

When one considers the Second Coming of Christ, it was not designed as an opportunity to be separated from God forever, but as an opportunity to “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Christ did not come “into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). Nevertheless, many will not join the Lord on that day because they have not made adequate preparation. Those who would prepare themselves for that day must study the Second Coming as well as all of God’s word (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), must not fall prey to error concerning it or anything else, and must be faithful to the end (Revelation 2:10).

Friend, are you ready for the Second Coming of Christ? In your heart of hearts, do you know that you know Him because you have kept His commandments faithfully (1 John 2:3)? When the apostle John considered the Second Coming of Christ, he was able to say, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20). Could you say the same? Are you looking for and hastening unto the day of the Lord, or are you fearful of it? It is my prayer that you will take to heart this lesson and make the necessary preparation for the return of Jesus Christ.