

Return of Christ #3: Purpose of Christ's Return.

Sunday 3rd December 2021. 2 Thess 1:3-12

PRAY

Read Verse 6 and 7.

▲ *Sometimes the very same event can be both wonderful and terrible at the same moment.*

Take a **football** match. When that goal is scored in extra time, half of the crowd go mad with joy and half go mad with sadness at the very same moment.

Or the **end of a war**. When the Nazi regime is toppled, those who have been loyal to the old guard are suddenly in serious trouble, and those who have suffered under them are full of rejoicing. It is both wonderful and terrible, depending on which side you are on.

Well the return of the Lord Jesus will be like this, except the emotions will be magnified a million-fold. For some, it will be a day of such devastation that they will ask the rocks and mountains to fall on them to shield them from Jesus. And for others it will be a day of such joy, such wonder, such excitement, that it will make the greatest moments of this life appear fade into insignificance.

The very same event can be both infinitely wonderful and infinitely terrible depending on where you stand.

This morning we come to the third study in our series on the Return of Jesus. We haven't looked at every passage there is on the return of Jesus (there are over 300 references!), and so I'm sorry if not all your questions are answered (Q&A next week) but we've tried to see the main emphases of the New Testament, and really we have been asking 4 questions...

- ♥ **Week 1: WHO. The fact of Jesus' return:** who is coming back? Jesus.
- ♥ **Week 2: WHEN. The timing of Jesus' return;** when is he coming back? No one knows. It could be sometime soon, it could be sometime later.
- ♥ **Week 3: WHY. The purpose of Jesus return.** What is he coming back for?
- ♥ And next week (DV- if Jesus hasn't returned) **Week 4: SO WHAT. The Implications of Jesus' return.** What difference should it make to my life?

The books of 1 & 2 Thess were written by Paul, to a very early Christian community in Thessalonica (Greece), to encourage them to keep serving Jesus and loving one another despite hard times. And in order to do that he particularly focuses on the Return of Jesus.

Today's passage is topped by **praise** (v3-5) and tailed by **prayer** (v11-12) - and we will come back to those in our application, but in between, we learn 2 of the main reasons the Bible gives us for why Jesus is coming back.... REPAY & RELIEVE. V6, v7

Why is Jesus coming back?

I) TO REPAY THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

This is really v6 (as seen), though there is more in verse 8 to 10.

They are shocking verses aren't they?

Repay with affliction, inflict vengeance, suffer punishment, eternal destruction, shut off from the presence of the Lord.

These are not easy verses. Not because they are not clear, but just because they are not comfortable. I wouldn't naturally choose to preach on this, we wouldn't naturally choose to address it, but since it is God's good word to us we must. And like from a doctor, you want to hear the truth both the bad news and the good news (which we will come onto). So we start with the reality of judgment.

Why is Jesus coming back? Well the first reason given **is to repay those who oppose the gospel of Jesus.**

"Hang on! I believe that ultimately God is merciful to all people, and everyone will experience his salvation"- that was a statement I found myself hearing from a fellow clergyman on a training day.

But Paul says no, and therefore God says no. Not everyone will be saved. Some will be lost. Not my words, Paul's words, and therefore ultimately God's words. We believe that what the Bible writers old and new wrote was God's word for us today.

Yes God is infinitely gracious, but some reject his grace. When Jesus comes back, he will repay those who oppose his gospel with eternal punishment.

Look carefully at verse 6. He's talking to Christians, and he says that God is going to repay those who afflict Christians...

▲ The Open Doors [website](#) tells the story of Somali Woman Momina (not her real name) who had a dream about Jesus Christ, and then managed to find a Christian, who gave her a Bible and she gave her life to Christ. But in Somalia Christian converts are intimidated, disowned or even killed. Momina was insulted and rejected by her family and her Muslim husband said she was dead to him. She feared seeing her children die one by one, and they had to run for their lives.

What does God think about such persecution? He hates it. Why? Because he loves his children. Like any human father who would be outraged and provoked to see his children beaten up, so God is outraged to see his people so terribly abused.

But the God of all justice (v5 righteous Justice) will not let it go unpunished. **V6.**

But those going to hell aren't limited to violent extremists who persecute the church. We may be OK with that.

Have a look at v8: the retribution which will be revealed when Jesus returns is for all those who do not know God. (v8a)

You see when the gospel/good news comes to us, proclaiming that Jesus is the humble servant like King who came down to die for us so that we might be forgiven, and who commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) most of the time we don't want him as King over us. V8 they do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [*did you notice **obey** v8 gospel not simply a good idea, it's a summons to obey Jesus*].

As we were thinking about recently in lifegroups from Revelation. The Lord Jesus Christ is **the lamb who was slain**. When he died on Good Friday, he opened up the door for anyone to be saved. He paid in death and blood so that we won't have to. He loves us, and longs for us, He sent his Spirit to give us new birth, and he is tender and gracious. He is the most generous and merciful and patient saviour King who offers himself to all. To all who come to him, he gives Eternal life. He is magnificent in his grace, mercy and salvation. Today we are going to share communion to remember that.

But the lamb is also a mighty roaring Lion, **the Lion of Judah**. He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, he holds the keys of death and Hades. He is like his Father Holy and Pure, and he cannot tolerate sin. If we spend our lives rejecting him, then there will be a day when he gives us what we ask for: life without him. We cannot take him on and win.

So on the final day, when God reviews our lives, and says what did you do with my Son, and we say, "I didn't think he was very important, I left him out", and he says "I sent him to die on a cross, and you didn't think he was very important", he will punish those who don't know God, and don't obey the good news of Jesus.

And that punishment is spelled out in verse 9.

These words are so hard hitting...

Look at the language

1. Punished- it's deserved
2. Everlasting- it's eternal
3. Destruction- it's devastating.
4. Shut out- it's final.

So the real hellness of Hell is that it shuts people out from God, the source of all that is good. Friendship, happiness, relationship, fun. There won't be any of that in hell. Well why is Jesus coming back?

1) TO REPAY THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

There are many applications that I could think of for this point, and we will look at some of them next week. **We must turn to Christ**. We must **tell others to turn to Christ**, the only saviour, submitting to him as Lord, not continuing to rebel. **We must live holy lives in readiness**.

But actually the application that the passage has in v3-5 for the Thessalonians is surprising. [Remember the context- the passage is topped with praise, and tailed with prayer]. We are to **praise God for perseverance**.

Whenever we see Christians persevering under afflictions and trials as the Thessalonians were, we should praise God for them. Because they bring evidence to the World of the judgement.

Have a look at the verses. **V3,4**

And v5 is fascinating. It shows that when we endure under trial (for example when Momina continues in her faith despite all the odds or we overcome peer pressure to share our faith at work) we are actually giving evidence, or a demonstration to the world that God's future Judgement is Just.

Praise God for perseverance, when we see it in us, or in our brothers and sisters. The only way you can persevere through difficulties is if you believe that there is a God coming back to judge the world and set everything right.

For many in Auschwitz, it was the hope of a future judgement that enabled them to suffer so much without going mad.

And it's the wonderful future that should keep us persevering too and that's what we come onto now.

Jesus is returning ...

1) to repay those who disobey the gospel.

2) TO RELIEVE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

Yes this day will be one of infinite tragedy and loss for some, But for others- those who trust in Jesus Christ, it will be a day of infinite wonder, joy and glory.

V7.

▲ I've told the story b4 of the one time I foolishly decided to pick on someone in the school playground. A young defenceless kid who I thought I could take on and win. But as he shouted out into the air for help, a giant of a sixth former came and beat me up for taking him on. The arrival of the 6th former was repayment for me, but it was relief for the young lad. The word in v7 is the word used for taking the pressure out of a bow (as in bow and arrow), or we might talk about pain relief.

Well what a relief it will be to those who face persecution for their faith, when Jesus returns to take on the bullies. What a relief it will be for believers, when we are vindicated for believing in Jesus, and those who (even if only in a small way) have excluded us, called us names, ridiculed us are seen to be in the wrong. But there's more to this relief in verses than simply the release of pressure 10 to 12. **v10-12** On the day of glory (v9), Jesus will be glorified in us. His saints- all his Christian people.

Now this is an amazing verse to pause on... literally it is "when he comes on that day to be glorified-in in his saints". Jesus's people will

reflect something of Jesus' glory back to Him, because when he appears 1 John 3:2 we shall be like him. He will be glorified, through us and us in him!

Wow won't that be amazing- to be Jesus-like on that day, and to shine back the glorious likeness of Christ into his own eyes. It's magnificent. All sin will be fully dealt with. We will be perfected, like Christ- no more sin, no more suffering, no more decay, no more grumbling, no more arguments, no more death.

It really will be a day of great relief and glory. But there's even more in the verse. V10. Marvelled at.

I wonder what you would say have been the best moments of your life so far?

- ♥ Seeing your favourite film with your best friends
- ♥ A family Holiday in some beautiful destination
- ♥ Falling in love
- ♥ The birth of your first child
- ♥ A magnificent view
- ♥ The satisfaction of a project going well.

Can I say that those things are peanuts compared to the **Wonder**, the **glory**, the **amazement** of the day when we see Jesus.

The one we have longed for, Jesus, seen face to face.

No more waiting. No more living by faith. Now we see him with our own eyes, and so do all those who have ridiculed and mocked him.

But he returns on the clouds with his angels in great glory.

It will be breathtaking. It will be wonderful.

Are you longing for a holiday? When Jesus returns it will be the beginning of the greatest everlasting day of rest.

Are you longing for a relationship? Very soon the heavenly bridegroom returns to take his bride home.

Are you longing for wholeness and healing in your tired and aching body? Jesus comes to bring new resurrection bodies to us.

The day when Jesus returns will be for those who believe the message of the gospel (**v10**) a wonderful day.

What a great day it will be.

Well the application is there in v11 and 12. Similar to the first time. Not praise for perseverance here, but **Prayer for perseverance. VII, 12.**

Paul is praying that the Thessalonians are made worthy of Jesus' calling. This doesn't mean that they are to gain acceptance with God through good works.

Rather Says Don Carson, they are to become "worthy of all that it means to be a Christian"- to grow into the maturity and lifestyle that befits a Christian disciple of Jesus.

He goes into a bit of detail: v11b. He's wanting this young church to please Jesus in every way. He wants them to keep going- bringing glory of Jesus, carrying out the good plans that God puts into their hearts. He is praying for their perseverance.

Do you see what Jesus is saying to you today?

Keep going. Keep going another week. It's hard, but keep going.

Don't let your good ideas to serve the Kingdom of God stay as good ideas. Put them into practice...

- ♥ Go to visit that housebound member of the congregation.
- ♥ Speak to someone new at church.
- ♥ Help out practically on that rota
- ♥ Have a Christmas party before or after the carol service and inviting friends along.
- ♥ Cook a meal for your housegroup.
- ♥ Drop an envelope of money anonymously through the letterbox of someone who is struggling to make ends meet.

And all these things not because you should, or because you feel guilty, but because you feel gratitude: Motivated by Grace v12.

It's a prayer for perseverance. Keep going on the bike!

▲ Sometimes the very same event can be both wonderful and terrible at the same moment.

Let's do what the passage says and pray. Let's pray.