

Understanding Christmas

Introduction: Acts 1:11

I love sports, but I hate to see my favorite team lose. These two facts have caused me to miss some of the greatest moments in sports, because if in the 3rd quarter, the Lakers are getting killed, they are playing poorly, and it looks like they have no chance; I'll turn the TV off. Sure enough, when I read the sports the next day, I'll discover they had this amazing comeback and won the game in the end.

Principle: Don't judge a game until it's over.

If you were to look at what's going on in this world, you might come to the conclusion that God did his best, but the power of evil was just too strong. It seems like the 4th quarter and God is losing the game!

Our society is going downhill, things seem to be getting worse all over the world, innocent people are suffering more than ever, and evil people seem to be doing better than ever.

The fact of the matter is the Bible told us this would happen.

Jesus in Matthew 24:15-22 told us explicitly that things were going to get worse.

Paul echoed the words of Jesus in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. That passage opens with this understatement: *in the last days difficult times will come.*

But there is great news. This world is not our ultimate home. Human history is not going to continue on as it has.

There is coming a day when God is going to interrupt human history by sending his son Jesus Christ to this earth. The first followers of Jesus heard this amazing message from the angel who accompanied Jesus to heaven 40 days after he rose from the dead.

Acts 1:11 (NASB95)

¹¹ They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

If you are a child of God, this is *the blessed hope*. it is the confident expectation that keeps us going in the darkest times.

If you are not a child of God, the coming of Christ is a warning to you that there is coming a day where you will be held accountable for your life.

The subject of the return of Jesus Christ, or the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ is so massive, we couldn't

adequately cover it in a year, let alone one message. Today, however, I want to give you three simple truths about the coming of Jesus.

First, he is coming to take his family home

Second, his coming means the end of human history as we know it.

Third, he is coming to judge all those who have rejected his offer of forgiveness of sins.

- I. The return of Jesus Christ will be to gather his people and take them home.

John 14:1-3 (NASB95)

¹ "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, the night before he was going to be killed. His disciples knew that things were coming to a head and they were deeply troubled.

He tells his disciples that his father's home has lots of room and that he was leaving them to prepare their future home.

Jesus finishes his thought in verse 3:

John 14:3 (NASB95)

³ “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Jesus is coming again and when he comes, he is going to take us home. As much as you may love your house and your family, you’ve never been home like you will be when Jesus comes.

1 John 3:2-3 tells us that when we see him, his work of transformation in us will finally be complete.

1 John 3:1-3 (NASB95)

¹ See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. *We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*

³ And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 tells us that when he comes, our bodies will be transformed into bodies that will be fit for eternity.

1 Corinthians 15:52 (NLT)

⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.

Paul goes on to say that our greatest enemy, death will be conquered. Verse 58 helps me to understand that this hope is my motivation to keep going in tough times.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB95)

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul tells us that the coming of Jesus is going to bring about a reconnection with our Christian loved ones and family members who have already died. This, too, is our hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NLT)

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with

the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words.

I could go on and on, but the point is that when Jesus comes, it is going to be a day of reunion, reward, and rejoicing.

This glorious hope revives our courage for the way,
When each in expectation lives and longs to see the day
When from sorrow, toil, pain and sin, we shall be free,
And perfect love and joy shall reign throughout all eternity.

—*John Fawcett*

So for the Christian, this is going to be an amazing time. Colossians 3:4 says that when Christ is revealed, we will be standing with him in glory!

But for the rulers of this world, the coming of Jesus is going to be a rude awakening! They will discover that their arrogance was misplaced.

II. The coming of Jesus Christ will bring an end to human empires

The prophet Daniel revealed the future of the human empires over 500 years before Jesus was born.

Daniel 2:31-35 (NASB95)

³¹ “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. ³² “The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. ³⁵ “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel 2:44 (NASB95)

⁴⁴ “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB95)

¹³“I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴“ And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

The simple fact is that human history is not going to continue as it has continued. When Jesus comes, it will not be as a humble child to save the world, it will be in glory, power, authority, and dominion. He will come to rule!!! When he does, the great powers of this world will come to an end. Daniel says they will be like chaff that is caught in the wind and scatters away. But the kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom and if you are a child of God, than this is your future, this is your destiny!

This is the day that Paul is speaking of in Philippians 2:9-11

This is going to be a day of great glory for Jesus Christ. Listen to the NT version of this.

Philippians 2:9-11 (NASB95)

⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted

Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is exactly why John challenged us not to fall in love with this world's system or the things associated with this world's system!

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB95)

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

You can either live your life serving a kingdom and things that will soon be dust, or you can live your life investing in something that will last for all eternity – the choice is yours.

III. The return of Jesus Christ will be to judge every person who did not accept God's offer of forgiveness

Jesus came the first time not to judge us, but to save us.

John 3:16-17 (NASB95)

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

But the second coming will be a coming to judge!

Acts 10:42-43 (NASB95)

⁴²“And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³“Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”

Do you hear what Peter is saying? He is saying that Jesus has been appointed by God the Father to judge the living and the dead, but the prophets bear witness that you can avoid that judgment, everyone who believes in him receives FORGIVENESS OF SINS!

Paul says the same thing in his sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17:30-31

Acts 17:30-31 (NASB95)

³⁰“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Now is the time to repent, because God has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through Jesus! He has proven the validity of Jesus by raising him from the dead!

You may want to scoff at this as some of the Athenians did in Acts 17, but I suggest that this is worthy of some serious research. If Jesus did rise from the dead, then he has given remarkable proof that he is the son of God and your future judge!

This judgment will be a judgment of the great and the small, the famous and the nobodies, the living and the dead – all will stand before Jesus Christ as their judge.

You may think, *I'll take my chances*. The problem is that God's standard is perfection, and you've already fallen short.

You might think, *that's not fair, nobody's perfect.*

RIGHT! THAT'S WHY GOD SENT JESUS TO DIE FOR YOUR SINS!

Conclusion:

If you have never taken the step to make Jesus your Lord and Savior, consider this. If God's Word is true, then this is the most important decision you have to make.

Coming to faith in Christ is more than just fire insurance from hell, it is actually discovering what true life is – it is living in connection with the God who created you. Your life will change, and you will love the change.

If you do know Christ, are you living in light of the fact that this world is temporary and that eternity is coming soon?

This has implications

- Your relationships

- Your values

- Your priorities

- Your trials – they are temporary

- Your joy – Jesus is coming! You are going to win!

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, sing His mercy and His grace; in the mansions bright and blessed He'll prepare for us a place.

While we walk the pilgrim pathway clouds will over-spread the sky; but when trav'ling days are over not a shadow, not a sigh.

Let us then be true and faithful, trusting, serving ev'ry day; just one glimpse of Him in glory will the toils of life repay.

Onward to the prize before us! Soon His beauty we'll behold; soon the pearly gates will open—We shall tread the streets of gold.

Chorus: When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory.