

Series: What We Believe

TITLE: The Return of Jesus Christ

Text: I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Today, ^{and} in our series on WHAT WE BELIEVE, I would like to share with you the great hope of the Christian Faith. And that is: that one day Jesus will come again. And, dear friends, a lot of exciting things are going to happen on that day when Jesus returns to planet earth. So, take your Bibles, please, and turn with me to the book of I Thessalonians chapter 4. I Thessalonians chapter 4 beginning with Vs. 13. ~~Will you please stand for the reading of God's Word.~~

(Read Vs. 13-18)

(Prayer)

I find it very interesting that ^{There} ~~there~~ are over 300 passages in the O.T. that predicted the first coming of Christ. And when Jesus came He fulfilled to the very letter those O.T. prophecies. But, in addition to all those prophecies related to His first coming, the Bible tells us over and over again that one day Jesus is going to come back. He will return. And I happen to believe on the bases of sound evidence that because He came the first time in amazing fulfillment of over 300 prophecies, that it isn't whistling in the dark to believe that Jesus is going to come again. Dear friends, logic dictates his coming.

^{So}
~~Now~~, today, I would like to share with you six (6) facts about the second Coming.

(1) Number one, the Bible teaches that the second coming of Christ will be a sure event. It is a certain event. It will happen.

In the book of Acts chapter 1 verse 11, the disciples were standing on ~~the~~ Mt. Olives and Jesus was about ready to ascend. He gave them some final instructions. He told them to be witnesses in all the world. Then he began to ascend into heaven. And the Bible says that their eyes were just glued on him. They couldn't take their eyes off of him. And naturally you would have done the same thing. And they watched him until he vanished from sight. And they stood there for several moments with their heads lifted up and their eyes fixed on the vanishing Jesus. And all of a sudden two men in white clothing stood beside them. And they said, vs 11, "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."

Now, the way Jesus went was physical and bodily. Many people say, "it was his spirit that vanished." But, I remind you that following his resurrection our Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples in a moment when they thought they were seeing things. And they said "it is a spirit. It is a ghost." And Jesus said, "OH, no, touch me, handle me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me have."

He picked up fish and a honey comb in their presence and ate it. He was there for 40 days in their presence following his resurrection. It was no ghost or spirit

Acts 1:11 says that this same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go.

Dear Friends
~~Believe~~ the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is going to return in the physical body in which he was resurrected. He is going to come back to this earth and the Bible predicts it....It is a sure event.

In fact, Jesus predicted his return. In John 14:3 He said to his disciples on the night before he went to the cross. He said "I am going to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you to myself." There the return is predicated. I WILL COME AGAIN.....It is a sure event.. It is based on the creditability and testimony of Jesus himself. Either he is telling the truth or he is lying. If he is lying, we had better go home and stop wasting our time here. But, if he is telling the truth it is the greatest news that the world could possibly hear. JESUS CHRIST IS GOING TO COME BACK TO THIS EARTH.

(2) THE SECOND FACT ABOUT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST IS THAT IT WILL BE A SURPRISEING EVENT.

In Matthew chapter 24 verse 44 we read these words: "For this reason you be ready ; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

In I Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 2 it says: "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night." [There are a lot of reports, laterly, in our local newspaper concerning robberies. And I have noticed one thing about all of these robberies. The thieves never called their victim to let them know they were coming to rob them.....A thief never gives his victim advanced warning so they can prepare.

Another interesting note about theifs is that they never come at the same time. They come at different hours.

The thief in the night. ^{The Bible tells} ~~Our Lord Jesus told~~ us that many people are going to be extremely surprised when the second coming of Christ occurs.

Now, the Bible does not teach that all people ^{will} ~~shall~~ be surprised. Contriary to what some people say. There will be some, the Bible says, who will be looking for him, who will be anticipating His presence, who will remember the words of Jesus and what He taught, and will be expecting Him to come at any moment. ^{But} The Lord Jesus Christ is going to come back and it is going to be a very surprising event for most people. They will not be ready, they will not be prepared...

Often, I hear when I share the Gospel of the Good News of Christ, somebody will always say: "Well, I have ^{plenty} ~~plenty~~ of time." "I have time to think about this and then will make a decision." My friends there are two things that you are very uncertain about.

(1) One is your own death. For none of us know when we shall die. The Bible says that it is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgement.

You are uncertain off... You're Dead

(2) And secondly, you are uncertain of the moment when Jesus Christ shall come.

And it will be a surprise event

(3) And the third fact about the second coming of Christ will help understand that. The third fact is that the second coming will be a sudden event.

It is going to happen suddenly, quickly. There will be no time for further preparations. The Bible teaches in the book of I Corinthians chapter 15 verse 52 that in a "moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the Lord is going to return." The word "moment" in the Greek language is our word "atom." In an "atom" in a twinkling of an eye, Christ will come. The twinkling of an eye is the fastest known human reaction. Christ will come so quickly there will be no time for you to decide, then, that you want to believe in him.

[Oh, no, the Bible warns us on the quickness, the suddenness of the return of Christ. To do what we need to do now, lest we be found unprepared in that day of his return. It is a sudden event.

In I Thessalonians 5:3 the Bible says "while they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

and The reason that statement is there in the sense of judgment is because ~~at~~ at the time Christ comes again, most of us believe that he is going to come preceding an event known as the GREAT TRIBULATION ~~that~~ that will come upon the world. It will be judgement such as the world has never yet seen. And we believe that Christ will return before that event. ~~It~~ And he will be coming, only, for those who believe in him.

And in our scripture lesson of I Thessalonians 4 we read that believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And we shall go back to heaven with him. ^{Believers} ~~we will~~ not go through the tribulation on earth. But notice to those who are left on earth the Bible says that when they are saying "PEACE AND SAFETY" then sudden destruction will come upon them as birth pangs upon a woman with child.

The point that I am making is that the world will be plunged into judgement and tribulation such as they have never known. And it will happen right at the moment when the world thinks they have peace and safety.

Today we find that situation in fulfillment of what the Bible predicts, even in terms of nations that are lined up and prepared for the second coming of Christ. The world is set. Jesus Christ is going to return. And it will happen suddenly.

^{The second Coming}
(4) The fourth thing about ~~this event~~ that we learn from the Bible is that it is a supernatural event.

In the book of I Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 52 it says that we are all going to be changed or ~~tran~~ transformed. It is a supernatural event.

In I Thessalonians chapter 4 it says that not only is the Lord going to descend from heaven, but also that the dead are going to be resurrected. And that believers are going to be caught up to meet Christ in the air.

In Philippians 3:20, it is speaking of Christ and it says that He will "transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory." It is a supernatural event.

Let me just share with you ³ four simple things that will happen that make that a very supernatural event.

(1) One is the resurrection of the dead. The great question of the ages: WILL THE DEAD RISE AGAIN? And all that Christians believe about the resurrection of the dead, which by the way is not reincarnation, but all that Christians believe about the resurrection of the dead is based upon one fact, ~~of which this day is a greater celebration.~~ And that is that Jesus Christ actually arose from the dead....bodily...And he was seen by many...

He was here and people saw him and touch him. They handled him. They saw that he was flesh and bones. And the Bible teaches that one day the dead are going to be resurrected because Jesus Christ arose from the dead. That is the first thing that happens in the second coming that causes us to say that it is a supernatural event.

(2) Secondly, ^{change} we have the renovation of the physical body of those who are alive. ^{change or reconstruction} The renovation of the physical body of those who are alive. ^{at his coming}

(1) The Bible has some very interesting words by which it describes this ^{change} renovation, or reconstruction of the physical body. What actual occurs?

I don't know about you, but these little details fascinate me. I want to know whether I am going to look like you or not. Whether you are going to look like me. I can't imagine a God of variety who made us all different. All of a sudden at the second coming making us all look alike. And it bothers me. Because there are some people I don't want to look like. And there are some people who don't want to look like me. So, you see, we have some problems here.

It is interesting that in the Greek language there are some answers to this question. For example: In Philippians chapter 3 verse 20, the Bible says that Jesus is going to change the body of our humiliation or lowliness. And the word "change" there in Greek is referring to "an outward appearance" change. But there are two words in Greek meaning "an outward change of appearance." We get our word "schizo" "schizophrenia" meaning "a person with two personalities." Schizo is the outward surface of which there is some else inside. But there are two words for the outward appearance. One, means 'to change it so that it looks exactly alike' The other means to change it, but even though it is an outward change it doesn't look exactly alike. And that is the word that is used in Philippians 3:20.

So, the Bible teaches at least in reference to Jesus we will not look exactly like Jesus in appearance. We will all be different. So, I praise the Lord for that.

(2C1) But, secondly, concerning this ^{change} renovation, the Bible teaches that this reconstruction is a fashioning after the body of Jesus Christ.

This idea is found in Philippians 3:20/ And the word "faishion" used in this verse means "a change in form and substance." A change in our very nature. And this change of nature will be into the nature like Jesus. And this excits me. Because the physical body of Christ was an unusual body. It could eat...And that excits me.....Eating in heaven. Now, I have always enjoyed eating. Haven't you? We know that also, of course, because of the marriage supper of the lamb. The Bible teaches that we will eat in heaven. It appears, thought, that it is not necessary to eat.

Also, we know that the physical body was not limited by substance like walls. For Christ could go stright through them.

We also know that the body could travel at great speads. And I am excited to know that my body is going to be changed, fashioned like the very substance and essence of the body of Christ. Even though I will not look like him nor will I look like others, I will be unquic. And yet my body will be constructed like the wonderful resurrected body of Jesus. It will not have the limitations we have now. There will be no more feeling of cold. There will be no pain, no suffering anymore.....PRAISE GOD.... And our bodies will be changed. In a moment of time. In the twikling of an eye. It is a supernature event inwhich the dead will be resurrected; and the physical bodies of those alive ^{at his coming} will be changed or reconstructed.

(3) The third thing that makes this supernature is that there will be a great rapture into space. Now, I don't know what you think about this. And I don't know how many christians will be alive at the time of the second comin. But this rapture is really going to be something. All over the world believer are going to be taken away in a moment of time.

~~Can~~ ^{Can} you imigine driving in a car if you are an unbeliever with a believer?...And he is ^{driving} taken and you are not. It could be dangerous. Can't you imigine going to work with some one. And the two of you are working together and all of a sudden He is gone.....Or, let's say you are out to dinner with your ^{husband} wife. And ^{he} she is a believer and you are not. And all of a sudden ^{he} she is gone and you are left to pay the check...

Must
500

I remeber one time when we changed our clocks. We were going ~~out~~ ^{at} daylight saving time and we were xuppose to- ~~move~~ ^{back} our clock ~~ahead~~. But I forgot to change the clocks. So, I showed up at the church an hour early. And nobody was there. I thought the rapture had taken place..... I was sure that I had the right time and the right place, but no one was there.....

Imagine what it is going to be like. We may laugh because we know christ. But there will be no laughter in the hearts of people who are left. There is going to be a rapture into space. It will happen quickly. And we will be gone. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Believers willn't be here anymore. All over the world, they will just be gone.

(4) The fourth event that is going to happen which will make it supernatural is that there is going to be a great reuion in the air. Only a god who is almighty and powerful could make this a possibility. That means that every single believer throughtout all human history, back into ancient O.T. times as well as into church history that we know, all of this, every believer, will all of a sudden be together in heaven. There will be a great reunion as believers of all ages are going to fellowship together. And that is going to be some experience.

People often ask the question: "Well, what about the dead now. Are they asleep?" Well, the Bible uses the term "sleep". But that means death. And the Bible teaches that the dead are conscious. Christ taught that they are conscious. Paul taught that they are consceious. The dead are conscious and able to communicate at least with those who are in heaven. And of course with Christ. The Bible does teach that.

And one day the dead are going to have a miracle happen to them. And that is that they will again have a physical body in which to express the life they now know. The dead are aconscious and they are responsive.

(5) The fiveth thing about the second coming of christ by way of facts is that it is going to be a significant event in human history.

Now, a lot of people think that the second coming of Christ will be rather ~~secretive~~ ^{secretive}. And the world will not know that it occurred. The Bible teaches that the world will know that it occurred. As a matter of fact, men who are on earth during the period of time known as the tribulation will be attributing things to the hand of God and know that He has intervened into human affairs. And yet they will continue ~~to~~ to rebel and not repent. It is an amazing paradox. Men will know that the events that are happening have happened because God has brought them into the world. And yet they will continue to refuse to repent and to turn to Jesus Christ.

Now, we know the second coming of Christ is going to happen very quickly. And naturally the governments of the world will do their best to explain the disappearance of people. They will think of something to explain it. But, there will be those who will know in their hearts from having heard it preached and taught that Jesus Christ has returned.

The Bible also teaches that when the second coming of Christ happens it is the beginning of the end ^{Phase}. The end is coming when Christ returns. All world history will come to a great climax. There will be a final war such as the world as never seen. World government will be a reality. ~~At~~ Some believe before the rapture, others believe shortly after the rapture. But we do know that shortly after all the governments of the world will be responding in one central core. ~~And~~

All there will be leadership such as never existed before. ~~At~~ And not only will world government be in existence, but all churches will be re-negated again. There will be one great world church. With its leader, the false prophet. And people will be following a line of deception. They will want their ears tickled with fancy words, meaning they will want to be entertained. And the Bible predicts that there will be a famine ~~for~~ for the WORD OF GOD. People will run to and ~~ask~~ for..."WHERE IS SOME OF THAT BIBLE TEACHING WE USE TO KNOW?" But, the Christian will be gone. And the world will be faced with the full fact that the end has come.

(6) The ~~sixth~~ ^{5th} fact about the second coming of Christ is that ~~it is going to~~ ^{it should be} ~~be~~ ^{it is going to be} a sanctifying event for all believers.

Now, what does that mean? Sanctify means "to set apart." It is also translated "to cleans" "to purify". ^{For example} In I John chapter 3:2-3 it says "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

I think a lot of us who are believers forget that. ^{Translating Truth} That if we truly believe that Jesus Christ is coming back, it is going to be purifying, sanctifying, cleansing in our lives. ^{Not Now} We will live different lives because ^{of the second coming of Christ} of it. Because we know at any moment He could return....

Christ told his disciples to occupy until He comes, He gave them parables illustrating how some people would not be prepared and would not use the talents and abilities He gave to them.

And over and over again our Lord taught us to be working, to be serving our ^{Lord} master. ~~the master of the household, for~~ ^{Many of you do nothing. You just fill a few. Dear Friends.} we are merely stewards that have been intrusted with things. Time and talents and money and abilities and careers, all of which should be used to honor and glorify Jesus Christ. Knowing that at any moment He is going to return. ^{it} Every one who ~~has~~ ^{will} this hoped fixed on him will purify himself, just as He is pure. ⁿ

^{and} Notice the great example ⁱⁿ Jesus. You will not try to conform your life to the standards that men will set up. You will conform your life to the standards of Jesus Christ. You will seek to live more life ^{like} him. Because you know that at any moment Jesus Christ could come again.

^{and} A strange passage occurs in I John chapter 2 verses 28 and 29. In verse 28 it says that there will be some people who will be ashamed at His coming. It is not referring to unbelievers. It is referring to believers. And the word means "to shrink away from". Then we have the verses in chapter 3 which I have just read to you. That if believers have this hope fixed on ~~themselves~~ themselves they will purify themselves just as he is pure. In other words, some believers are going to be embarrassed when Christ returns.

The only thing that I can say to you regarding that is that it appears at that moment some christians living in carnality will be embarrassed and surprised by the return of Jesus Christ. Because it will happen so fast and they will not be living lives that are pleasing to Him.

I wonder ^{dear} Christian friend if you really understand what it means to have the hope of the second coming fixed upon you. A lot of us say, "Well, I believe that Jesus Christ is going to come back." But, so do the believers that are going to be ashamed at his coming. "TO BE FIXED ON ME" means "this is resting on my life and it is controlling what I do, what I think, and what I say."

For example: Christ taught us that if we really believe the second coming we would be careful about the words we use. We wouldn't be critical of others without thinking first. For we are accountable to God for every idle word. ~~We would be careful about what we say.~~ *[We would be careful about*

we would be carefully of what we want what we do. ~~If~~ *If* we believed that at any moment Jesus Christ could come back,

Now, I am glad that our sins have been judged. I am glad that our sins have been paid for. They are forgiven. ~~The admonition~~ *But! Commandment* is for us, now, in this life, to cleanse our life.

And how does one cleanse his life? By practical obedience to God's Word. Christians, I challenge you. Are you right now, and you know it, and God knows it, but you know that there is a certain area of your life, a sin in your life, a habit, there is something you know that is violating the Word of God, The Bible warns us that one day Jesus is going to come. What you do, do now. Your life should count now. Make sure you are obeying God's Word now. Deal with that ^{now} now. Don't wait any longer.

Every one who has the hope fixed on him will purify himself, just as He is pure. We are responsible, ~~by the way~~, to cleanse our own lives. Some people say, "Well, Jesus cleanses." Hay, that happened at the cross. It is already done. ^{But} The practical cleansing that goes on in your life and mine is our responsibility. It is our responsibility to obey the principles of God's Word. Positional, I am already cleansed. I am already forgiven of all my sins. That is done and paid for.

on The thing that I am now responsible for is the practical ^{daily} cleansing of my life by application of God's Word to my life. To obey it....Every one who has this hope will purify himself.

(b) One final fact. Fact number 6. The Bible teaches that the second coming of Christ will be a very selected event. Not everybody will be participating in it. How sad.

In Matthew 24 verse 37 we read this: (Read Matt 24:36-42)

Now, people often disagree as to the meaning of these verses. Some say that it is referring to those who will be going into the great judgement period, the tribulation. Therefore, the one who is taken is taken into the judgement. And he will be taken into judgement during the tribulation period. And the one who is left would be left to go into the Millennium at the time of the 1000 years reign of Christ upon the earth. ~~the~~

out Others liken the "take away" aspects to the flood which took away people. And if the flood would represent tribulation upon earth, then those who went into the Ark preceding the flood, Noah --his sons and their wives--- would represent believers who are taken away at the rapture. And the ones who are taken, meaning "taken away by the flood" would be those who die during the tribulation period without Christ. Then the millennium would be set up on earth.

However, it is interesting that in Vs 40 and 41 when it says that one will be taken and one will be left, that the word "taken" means "to take along side of". Where as in Vs 39 when it says that the flood "took" them all away, "it is to take in judgement." So, we have two different words in the Greek language.

When it says that "one is taken" and it means to "take along side of" It is the same thing Jesus said in John 14:3 when he said: "I will come again and receive you unto myself." Literally to ⁽take you along side of me⁾ So, the meaning, really, is two fold. Not only the flood representing the tribulation, but like Noah and his sons being taken into the ark, so one will be taken along side of Jesus. And the other left to experience that judgement and that flood.

~~Again, that~~ ^{How this}

event is going to be selective. Some will not be ready when Jesus comes. And it will happen so fast. One will be taken. And one will be left. Christ taught that ~~homes~~ ^{homes} will be divided. One would be taken and one would be left. Business enterprises will be upset. One will be taken. One will be left. It is very selective.

Christ Comes

You say, "How do I know that at that moment, I will be taken to be with ~~Christ?~~ ^{him} How can I be assured that at the moment ~~He~~ ^{He} comes I am on my way to heaven with him? *How?*

SOFTLY

The Bible teaches that there is only one way to make sure. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but ~~by~~ ^{by} me." There is no other way to heaven, then through Jesus Christ. He, alone, can save you. No one else.

The church, as wonderful as it is, a body of people who have come to know Christ, the church cannot do what the head does. The church is the body. Christ is the head. The church cannot save you.

Certainly buildings and organization can't either.

Baptism cannot save you.....

Your good works will not save you. I praise the Lord for those who try in their life time to live like Jesus lived. Who try to do the best they can. And who try to do works of righteousness that they believe are ~~acceptable~~ ^{acceptable} to God.

But the point is that the Bible says that none of this is acceptable. How could God be just and fair and accept the works of our hands and ignore the finality and completeness of his son's sacrifice. He ~~could~~ ^{would} not be just, Holy, fair, or loving. No, God will ~~not~~ ^{not} accept you no matter how much good is in your life. It only takes one lie to make a liar. If we have offend in one point of the law we have offend in all points. One sin or a thousand, we are guilty. The soul that sinneth it shall die.

~~There is only one hope.~~ ^{now is the way to heaven} And that is to believe that Jesus arose from the dead. That when he died on the cross, he died there for your sins and mine. Sin is already paid for. I am already forgiven.

You can't earn God's favor. You don't deserve on the bases of your own merits a place in God's haeaven. It is only through Jesus Christ and what he has already done for you. That my friend will change your life.

The Bible says "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. And behold all things have become new."

I heard a story several years ago that has always been with me. It is about a little boy who was setting in front of ~~the~~ ^{The} grandfather clock. This grandfather clock was ticking away and the pendulum was swinging back and forth. And this boy was watching this clock. And he liked to watch as the clock approached the hour. He loved to hear the bell sound as it sounded out each hour. ~~And~~ ^{Well}, the little boy was in front of the clock as it approached the hour of 12 noon. And he loved to hear the 12 bells ring out from that old grandfather clock.

~~At~~ this particular day as he sat there the clock struck 12 and the bells starting ringing out....10...11...12...And something happen in the clock and it didn't stop at 12 but keep right on ringing.....13.....14.....15.

And it scared the daylights out of that little kid. And he went running to his mother and he screamed: "MOTHER, IT IS LATER THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN BEFORE.".....

The point is clear...It is later than it has ever been before. It really is. I don't know when Jesus is coming. The Bible tells us that we will not know the day or the hour. I don't even know the year. And it would be foolish to try and guess. But I do know that all the things that are happening in the world right now seem to point to the nearness of the second coming of Christ.

And the Bible teaches that it could happen at any moment.

And you can sit there and say: "Well, it hasn't happen yet."....And that is just what the Bible says will be the current opinion of ~~those~~ ^{FOLKS} at the time he comes.....Oh, friends, Christ is coming. Are you ready? *And I trust when he comes he will find you serving him.*
Let's close with a word of prayer

Closing Hymn - In The Service of The King

SOFTLY

Every head blowed....All eyes closed.....The message of the gospel is quite simple. Jesus died to pay for your sins. You can't pay for your own sin. You can't earn or pay for a place in heaven. But Christ has made a place for you. And he has forgiven you of all your sin. That is the greatest news that a person could hear. No matter what sins are in your life, God has forgiven you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As you are sitting there reflecting on your own life, do you know that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Saviour? Are you convinced that your sins are forgiven? That you are on your way to heaven with Christ?

If you don't have that assurance, let me remind you that Jesus said in so many different ways but it all comes down to the same thing. ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE...CALL UPON THE NAME OF JESUS AND YOU WILL BE SAVED..... CONFESS...RECEIVE....All are reflecting a simple decision that you can make in your life to invite Jesus Christ into your life as Saviour and Lord. Have you done that?.....

You might be here and maybe your are saying: "Pastor Bill, I really don't have that assurance. If Jesus would come back right now, I don't know whether I would be taken."

With every head blowed and all eyes closed and you don't have this assurance of eternal salvation, but you want to know..you want this assurance.. and right where you are you say: "Pastor, would you pray for me".....

So, let's pray and you pray with me.....

Close in prayer

(Pray the sinners prayer)