



BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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SERIES : "THE LAST THINGS"

Study 5 : "Jesus Returns" - September 3, 2006

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INTRODUCTION : to the series

The "Last Things" is a Series on God's ultimate purposes for his people and his creation. The Series will pick up on the main themes through the Scriptures; themes which find their ultimate fulfilment when Jesus returns to the world. Then the whole of creation is renewed, his people are "clothed with immortality," and God reigns supreme.

INTRODUCTION : to Study 5

Today's Study is about the most extraordinary event in future history - The Return of Jesus Christ to earth. Our main Reading this morning, 1Th4:13-5:4 is one of many sections of the New Testament about this promised event; every Chapter of this particular letter ends with a reference to it.

These first followers of Jesus at Thessalonica lived with a keen expectation that Jesus could return at any moment. Some were afraid that those of their brothers and sisters in Christ who had died would somehow "miss out" or be disadvantaged when Jesus did return. So Paul writes :

... we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever 1Th4:16-17

Some Psalms have the word "Selah" in them. It means to "pause and think awhile" before rushing on. Now would be a good time to "selah" awhile! ... *"and so we will be forever with the Lord."* Why pick this phrase out from all that these verses teach? Well, the "shout," the "trumpet blast," the rising of the dead and the transformation of the living" will catch our attention! but they are passing, momentary things. Being with Jesus will be our experience for eternity. Everything else, no matter how extraordinary, pales into insignificance.

"When I stand in glory, I will see his face, and I'll serve my King, forever, in that Holy Place."

A. 4 FACTS ABOUT JESUS' RETURN

1. ITS CERTAINTY : JESUS WILL RETURN

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back ... Jn14:3a

2. ITS NATURE : JESUS' RETURN WILL BE PERSONAL AND VISIBLE

... and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. Jn14:3b

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ... suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them ... and said ... "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Ac1:9-11

3. ITS NECESSITY : GOD'S WORK IN US REQUIRES HIS RETURN

a. The Spirit's ongoing task is to grow the marks of Jesus' CHARACTER in us. (Gal5:22-23)

And we ... are being transformed into his likeness. 2Cor3:18

... conformed to the likeness of his Son. Rom8:29

b. The Spirit's presence in us now is the PROOF of God's intentions for us.

He ... put his Spirit in our hearts ... guaranteeing what is to come. 2Cor1:22-23 also Eph1:13-14

c. The Return Of Jesus brings this work to COMPLETION

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ. Php1:6

"We know that when he appears we shall be like him" 1Jn3:3

and includes the TRANSFORMATION of our physical bodies (more about this in Study 6)

... we shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable ... For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

4. ITS SCOPE : THE UNIVERSE WILL BE RENEWED AT JESUS' RETURN

Not just personal, but COSMIC

Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God Rom8:21

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief ... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2Ptr3:10-13

B. THE LANGUAGE OF JESUS' RETURN

The common word for "coming" (eleusis) is not used in Scripture for the Lord's second coming .. as though it was thought inadequate to describe such a momentous event! The main words used are :

1. "Parousia" (PRESENCE) Used commonly in NT times for the arrival or presence of a prominent person such as a governor or King. eg 1Th4:15 "... the coming of the Lord."
2. "Apokalypsis" (UNVEILING) Conveys the idea that Jesus is to be seen, suddenly, in all his power. eg. 2Th1:7 "... the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire ..."
3. "Epiphaneia" eg. (MANIFESTATION) Suggests the public / open nature of Jesus' Return. The word is associated with the idea of "glory." Eg. Titus 2:13 "... the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." and 2Thes2:8 "... the splendour of his coming"

Term 1 emphasises that this "prominent person," not seen in person before, is now actually present.

Jesus reigns now as Lord and King (Ac2:29-36), but his glory is hidden. Terms 2 and 3 indicate that his glory will no longer be "hidden" in any way at his Return.

You will note from the verses cited, that the translators were not consistent when dealing with the underlying Greek words. There are two main reasons for this. 1/ in many cases it would not have been as clear in English that it was Jesus' Return under discussion. 2/ the NT writers didn't seem to have any clear distinctions in mind when they wrote. Although it is impossible to do so, a recent teaching seeks to prove a 2 stage "2nd Coming" based on these different words. ("Jesus coming for his Church secretly" and then, seven years later, "coming with his Church openly")

C. THE TIMING OF JESUS' RETURN

UNKNOWN and UNKNOWABLE

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Mt24:36 also Ac1:7

NOTE the repeated point made by Jesus.

1. The Example of Noah's Day (Mt24:37-42)

... they knew nothing of what would happen until the flood came and took them away ... therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" v39-42

2. The Thief In The Night (Mt24:43- 44)

... the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. v44, also 1Thes5:1-3

3. The Negligent Steward (Mt24:45-51)

The master ... will come on a day when he does not expect him & at an hour he is not aware of. v50

4. The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (Mt25:1-13)

Therefore keep watch, because you don't know the day or the hour. v13

NOTE : I understand everything after Mt24:36 refers to Jesus' 2nd Coming and everything prior to v36 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. (See the Disciples questions in 24:3) For the destruction of Jerusalem there are "signs" in order for those who believed Jesus to act and escape, but for the Lord's 2nd Coming there are no signs. We will look at this in detail in Study 11, "Jesus and the End" on October 15 in the Morning Service - and in an extended afternoon Seminar for those who are interested to explore more fully

