

The countdown started well before Thanksgiving and with each passing day the excitement & preparations for its arrival have been accelerating. Lights and decorations have been put up, stores are full, and music is filling the air. A lot of people, especially children, are eagerly anticipating a very special event that is now only a few days away! Truly, we are now in a very busy time of the year!

And it's all in preparation for what? Well, any child can tell you - "A visit from Santa Claus, of course!" And remember, "He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake! You better not pout, you better not cry - you better watch out, I'm telling you why - Santa Claus is coming to town!"

Now that may be important to many people, but the One whose coming I'm looking forward to won't be coming from the North Pole and riding in a sleigh. Instead, He's coming from Heaven, and arriving on the clouds of the sky!

You see Christmas is about the first coming or Advent of Jesus to our world but many people forget or don't even know that He is coming again.

For some of us that grew up in church at least forty years ago or more we lived with the tension that Jesus would be coming back at any minute. More than once in my younger life I panicked with fear over thinking I was left behind.

Someone wrote: When I was a little boy, my brother and I were riding on a country road with my father. Our mother was following behind us in another car. My dad asked if I would like to ride with my mother. I thought that was a good idea, so my father stopped the car and let me out on the side of the road. My mother was probably two or three miles behind us at that time. So, I waved goodbye to my father and brother and began watching for my mother to arrive. Soon I saw her car in the distance and I began jumping up and down and waving my arms.

Suddenly, for some unknown reason, she passed me by. My first impulse was to begin running after her car. Soon, I found myself standing there in tears. I have never forgotten how it felt to be left behind. When Jesus Christ comes back again, many people are going to be left behind.

Our goal must be to be ready because the fact is He is going to come back.

No matter how you look at it, His arrival will be awesome, and the anticipation we feel is not ours alone. Millions of people in nations all over the world are eagerly awaiting His coming. And when He does, He'll be doing what the prophets have proclaimed - He'll be bringing gifts to men and women from every nation.

We should make our plans and prepare our hearts, our minds, & our souls to understand the aspects of His coming which set Him apart from all others. And to get us started, let me share with you from God's Word concerning His coming.

For example, here are the words of a wise man that lived long, long ago. Daniel was a man determined to serve the Lord. And every time the king had a vision from God, Daniel was called upon to interpret the dream. One night, when Daniel was lying on his bed he had an awesome vision from God. Daniel wrote about this vision in the 7th chapter of his book. Listen to what he wrote:

As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14 NLT

Do you understand what I just read? In a vision, Daniel says that he saw the Son of Man coming with the clouds of Heaven in glory and power. And all the people and nations of the entire world worshipped Him!

And Daniel wasn't the only one to talk about His coming. Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Church in Thessalonica. Paul wrote,

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^[h] 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.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 NLT

Jesus isn't sending an ambassador - He is coming Himself! And we need to be ready for that day. So let's take time this morning to consider Jesus seriously and to be excited about His return to earth and the importance of having our hearts prepared for His coming.

Isn't it fun to watch the excitement grow on the faces of our children as Christmas Day approaches? With each passing day the grins grow, the adrenaline level rises and they often become more hyper and excited.

We should be even more excited! Children are excited about the coming of a round man in a red suit with toys tucked under his arm. You and I can be excited about the coming of our King dressed in all His radiance and riding the clouds of heaven.

Do you realize that we're commanded to look forward to the coming of Jesus? In 2 Peter 3:11-12, Peter asks a question of the people, "What kind of people should you be?" Peter answers his own question by saying, "*You should live holy lives & serve God, as you wait for and look forward to the coming of the day of God.*"

That childlike enthusiasm and excitement was certainly a driving force for the early Christfollowers. In the last verses of the last chapter of the last book in the Bible, John

writes, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20 NIV

Why this message now? We are now in one of the most stressful times of the year. According to a recent poll over 45% of us would just as soon skip Christmas. Most of that angst is based the fact that most people spend way more than they have or should spend.

Christmas as a holiday will come and go but there is something so much more that we should be looking forward to.

The Second Advent of Christ or His return to earth ought to be on our minds every day.

1. How will Jesus return?

Will He return as the 7th incarnation of Buddha, or as some mystical force to be called upon by those who, like Star Wars Luke Skywalker, are looking for "The Force?" Well, we don't have to wonder, because the Bible quite clearly tells us how Jesus will return. Jesus Himself spoke about that when He said,

And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven. Matthew 24:30-31 NLT

"Every eye will see him, & every knee will bow before Him, & every tongue will confess that He is Lord! And this time He's coming with power & glory!

2. When will Jesus come?

This poses a major problem for most of us because as a people we like to be prepared. Most people will be prepared for Christmas morning because we have a deadline to work with.

We all know that if we don't have our presents bought by Christmas Day then we will let our family down. The problem we have when we look at the second coming of Jesus is that we do not know when He will return, we only know that He is coming.

Jesus said of His coming in Matthew 24, "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. ³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. ³⁹ People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

⁴⁰ *“Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.*

⁴² *“So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. Matthew 24:37-44 NLT*

Jesus says when you least expect Him, expect Him.

What time would that be for you? Just after you’ve finished all of the hard work of gathering your Christmas gifts for those you love? I can hear it now, "Lord, it’s good of you to come, but you’re timing leaves much to be desired."

Would it be when you hang up the phone after talking to Toys R’ Us and learn that they have just received the gaming system, Kindle Fire or Ipad you’ve been praying for? Would it be January 1 when the really big bowl games are just cranked up? Whenever you least expect Him, expect Him!

Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters,^[a] we don’t really need to write you. ² For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 NLT

Paul encourages us to avoid setting dates and getting all wrapped up in thinking we know when Jesus will return because His return will be like a thief in the night.

The boss caught Calvin sitting at his desk staring out the window. “why aren’t you working Calvin?” Without much thought Calvin confessed to his boss, “Because I didn’t see you coming.”

3. Why is Jesus coming back to earth?

We have looked at how Jesus will return, when Jesus will return, & now I want us to look at "why" He is coming back. There are really two different reasons why Jesus is coming back.

A. First of all, Jesus is coming back for us! Now, that’s awesome! When Jesus was getting ready to go to the cross He told His disciples,

“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” John 14:1-4 NLT

B. There is a second reason why Jesus is returning which we certainly don’t want to miss. Jesus came the first time as a servant, a sacrifice for our sins. He was beaten and rejected by those He came to save from their sins.

Jesus is coming back, but this time He will not come as a sacrifice or servant, but He will come in all of His glory to rule and reign as the exalted King of all creation. John wrote in Revelation,

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: "The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." ¹⁶ The twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell with their faces to the ground and worshiped him. ¹⁷ And they said, "We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign. Revelation 11:15-17 NLT

You can look around you today and see that what is promised is not what is. In that day when Jesus returns the Lion will lie down with the Lamb, nations will no longer wage war against nations, there will be no more death, or mourning, or pain, or sorrow - Jesus will rule and reign triumphant!

He is coming to town! I hope you have received that message today. We are talking about Jesus today. We're not talking about Mohammed, Buddha, Maharishi Yogi or anyone else for that matter - we're talking about Jesus and He is coming to town. God has exalted Jesus' name above every other name, and every knee will bow before Him and acknowledge what I have just shared with you - Jesus is the exalted Messiah & King! Paul wrote in Philippians 2,

Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11 NLT

Today we have looked at the "how" of Jesus' coming, we have looked at the "when" of Jesus' coming, and we've looked at the "why" of Jesus' coming. There is one more thing I want to share with you before we conclude our study. Jesus brings good gifts to His people.

4. Jesus is bringing gifts to His people

According to shcoon.com here are the top ten gifts on their list that people want:

1. IPhone virtual video glasses
2. Atari iPad Arcade Console
3. Air Guitar with Laser Strings
4. Remeo Mind Control Dreaming Mask
5. Retro iPhone Rotary-style Headset
6. Fog Ring Blaster
7. NFL Logo Toasters- creates team logo on the toast
8. Beer Box Cowboy Hat

9. iPhone Pinball Magic Console
10. Polly the Insulting Electronic Parrot

I can assure you of one thing: "Whatever you get it is going to wear out."

Now it may wear out because you use it so much or it may wear out because you get bored with it and never pick it up, but I assure you that everything you get this Christmas is going to wear out.

When Jesus gives gifts they never wear out. He has come to give us eternal life, the privilege of sharing eternity before His glorious throne for all time. James wrote about this:

"Every good action and every perfect gift is from God. These good gifts come down from the Creator of the sun, moon, & stars, who does not change like their shifting shadows. God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things He made." James 1:17-18 NCV

Do you get excited that Jesus is coming back? I don't know the hour or the day, I don't know much period, but there is one thing I know - He is coming back! He is coming back for those who have received Him as King and Lord of their life and when He comes back there will be no mistaking Him. He won't be riding on a sleigh with eight tiny reindeer, He will be riding the clouds of Heaven and His radiance will flood the universe.

Where is your excitement level this Christmas? Are you overburdened by your list of things "to do" which seems twice as long as your children's "wish list?" Are you excited about seeing what you will find under the tree on Christmas morning? Are you excited to see family and friends that you haven't seen in some time? Are you excited because He is coming to town?

Vernon Grounds writes, "A friend told me of an incident that happened while he was in seminary. Since the school had no gymnasium, he and his friends played basketball in a nearby public school.

Nearby, an elderly janitor waited patiently until the finished playing. Invariably he sat there reading his Bible. One day my friend asked him what he was reading. The man answered, 'The book of Revelation.' Surprised, my friend asked if he understood it. 'Oh, yes,' the man assured him. 'I understand it!' 'What does it mean?' Quietly the janitor answered, 'It means that Jesus is gonna win.'" Grounds concludes, "That's the best commentary I have ever heard on that book. Jesus is going to win. That's the biblical mind-set."

On the shore of beautiful Lake Como, nestled in the Italian Alps, is a lovely old villa, perhaps two or three hundred years old. For years the grounds have been immaculately kept by a trusted old gardener. One day some tourists were complimenting him on his work. "The owner must come here frequently to supervise your work," one of them said.

“No, sir,” answered the gardener. “He has been here only once in fifteen years and then I did not see him.”

“Well, then, how do you get your orders?” came the next question.

“They come from the owner’s agent, who live in Milan,” the old man replied.

“Then he must come here often.”

“No, not often, perhaps once a year or so.”

“This is quite amazing,” said the tourist. “You have no one to supervise your work, and yet the grounds are as neat as if you expected the owner to come back tomorrow.”

“Today, sir!” came the old gardener’s firm reply. “Not tomorrow, today!”