

Our Blessed Hope: A Study of Biblical Eschatology

Lesson 2: The Return of the King

*¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This **Jesus**, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will come** in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*
(Acts 1:10-11)

I. Review: “Eschatology” is ...

Individual eschatology ...

General eschatology ...

Jesus assured his followers that he would eventually return (Matthew 24–25; John 14–17; Acts 1:10-11).

Jesus’ return is taught throughout the New Testament and has always been an essential article of faith in Christian theology.

The New Hampshire Confession, Article 18:

We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the Last Day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.

II. The Necessity of Christ’s Return

It’s necessary for Jesus to return because God’s work is not done. God’s plan is not completed. There is creation, there was a fall, there is redemption in Christ, and there will be consummation. History is coming to a close. God is going to wrap things up. All things that are wrong will be set right. And Christ has promised that he would return. He says in John 14 that he goes to prepare a place for us, and that if he goes and prepares a place for us, he’ll return and receive us unto himself. Christ is also going to return to judge the living and the dead...

There are a number of reasons that the return of Christ is important, not the least of which is that the return of Christ is sort of the consummation of the resurrection of Christ. He is risen. He is risen indeed. But he is risen that he might come again. And this is what we say in the Lord’s Supper. Right? “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

This is central to the message of the gospel.

- Voddie Baucham, Jr

A. **Abraham's** Heir

God's covenant with Abraham includes the promise of _____ for Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15, 17).

God also promised that Abraham would be the father of _____ nations. While Canaan would be at its center, this promise would not be limited to Kanan.

Paul interpreted this promise to mean that Abraham and his descendants would inherit the entire _____ (Romans 4:13).

After testing Abraham and sparing his son Isaac, God confirmed that his covenant blessings would be realized through Isaac to the entire world (Genesis 22:17-18).

Isaac was a " _____ " or foreshadowing that prefigured Christ.

God's promises would *ultimately* be fulfilled through Isaac's descendant _____.

Jesus has to come back _____ so that the promises to Abraham and Isaac can be fulfilled.

B. **David's** Heir

God promised that one of David's descendants would rule over Israel, and then over all nations, _____ (Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 7:14).

Jesus is already reigning in _____ with complete authority over both heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22).

To fulfill God's promise to David, Jesus must return to _____, re-establish the Davidic throne over Israel, and rule over the whole earth forever (Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 25:31-32).

III. **The Manner of Christ's Return**

Jesus will descend from heaven as the victorious, conquering King over all creation.

A. His return will be **personal**.

Jesus is coming back *in person* to finish his work.

After Jesus' resurrection, he explained that he was going to send the Holy Spirit to empower the _____ for ministry (Acts 1:4-5).

After Jesus' ascension, two angels appeared and told the apostles that Jesus would *personally* return in the future (Acts 1:11).

Peter was so persuaded of this reality that it became part of his _____ presentation:

¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things ... (Acts 3:19-21a)

B. His return will be **physical**.

Jesus didn't give up his _____ when he ascended into heaven; he has both a divine nature and a human nature.

To complete his human work, Jesus must return in his full humanity, including his body:

- The promises made to Abraham and David can only be fulfilled through Jesus' *humanity*.
- Jesus must return in his human nature in order to complete his work as the prophet like Moses.
- The angels at his ascension said that he'd come back physically (Acts 1:11):

*This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in **the same way** as you saw him go into heaven."*

The New Testament consistently teaches that when Jesus returns, he'll appear in his _____ physical human body.

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil. 3:20-21)

C. His return will be **visible**.

When Jesus returns in his glorified human body, we'll be able to _____ him.

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him ... (Revelation 7:1)

²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man ... ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:27,30)

_____ on earth will see him because Jesus' return will be an earth-shattering event.

D. His return will be **triumphant**.

Jesus' _____ coming did not appear triumphant:

- born to a poor, humble family
- no political or military power
- condemned and executed as a criminal

Jesus "made himself nothing" – meaning he _____ his divine glory (Phil. 2:7-8).

"... emptied himself ... being found in human form ..."

When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the Father revealed the _____ Jesus has always possessed as God (John 17:5).

⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

When Jesus returns, his glory will be on full display:

- He'll come with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).
- He'll be announced "with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- He'll come with blazing fire and angelic armies (2 Thessalonians 1:7).
- He'll be crowned with many crowns, followed by the armies of heaven, and carrying an iron scepter to rule the nations (Revelation 19:11-16).
- Everyone will bow before his power and authority; no one will be left to oppose him (Philippians 2:9-11).
- His throne will be in the New Jerusalem, and his glory will be so bright that the city won't need lamps or even the sun (Revelation 22:3-5).
- His heavenly kingdom will spread out to encompass the entire world (Revelation 11:15).

IV. The Signs of Christ's Return

The "signs of the times" are the events that indicate the progress of God's eschatological timeline.

Three stages of the eschaton or "last days":

- _____ – Jesus' first advent
- _____ – time in which we now live
- _____ – when Jesus returns

A. The time of His return is a **divine mystery**.

"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3)

From the perspective of his _____ nature, even Jesus didn't know when he would return (Matthew 24:36, 42-44).

Scripture says clearly that only _____ knows the timing of Christ's return.

And although only God knows when it will happen, and we cannot predict it, there are certain biblical *conditions* to His Coming.

B. Some **precursors** to Christ's Return:

Generally speaking, these precursors aren't _____.

God's prophecies are fundamentally _____. Just as a potter can recast clay into a different vessel, God has freedom in how he fulfills prophecies about the future.

1. _____ opposition

A particularly terrible period of demonic opposition will precede Jesus' return. ("the Great Tribulation").

In the Great Tribulation, demons will empower false prophets to perform misleading signs and wonders (Revelation 16:13-14; Matthew 24:24).

2. _____ opposition

Many human beings will cooperate with the demonic opposition to God.

- two beasts with power to control societies and governments (Revelation 13)
- "the false prophet" (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10)
- "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10)
- false prophets and false Christs (Matthew 24:24)
- many antichrists (1 John 2:18)

3. Worldwide _____

The kingdom will successfully present its gospel message to the nations (Matthew 24:14).

Jesus associated the Great Commission with the entire continuation of the kingdom until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

When Jesus returns, the church will include members from every tribe, language, people and nation (Revelation 7:9).

C. Evangelical Interpretive Approaches:

- Preterism –
- Futurism –
- Historicism –
- Idealism –

These interpretive strategies all can be used as tools to help us understand various aspects of Scripture.

Next week: Views of the Millenium