

THE SECOND COMING

Background

What do we mean by the 'Second Coming'? This means the visible return of Jesus, the Messiah, to this world – a still future event. Note that this study deals primarily with the future, so should be addressed with a sense of caution and humility. We need to recognise that although the fact of Jesus' return is certain, it is unwise to be too dogmatic about details.

How do we know that there will be a visible return of Jesus to this world?

The Old Testament clearly predicted the first coming of the Messiah, even giving details of his death (see especially Isaiah **52** and **53**). Yet the majority of the Hebrew nation was unprepared and blind to the things that were happening. The Bible is equally emphatic about Jesus' *visible return* – the second coming. Jesus himself referred to his second coming more than twenty times, and there are more than two hundred other such references in the New Testament. As Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies contained in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah, so will he fulfil prophecies relating to his second coming. See especially Acts **1:11** and 1 Thessalonians **4:14**. (See also the book entitled 'The Birth of Christ' also available free on the *Glory to Glory website*, and especially Appendix 3 relating to prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah.)

Psalms **22:1, 7, 13–18**; Matthew **24:21–30**; John **14:3**; Acts **1:11**; Romans **11:25–26**; 1 Corinthians **1:7**; Philippians **3:20–21**; 1 Thessalonians **1:9–10**; **2:19**; **3:12–13**; **4:16, 18**; Titus **2:13**; Hebrews **9:28**.

Before his return, certain things will have happened

A long time will pass after the first coming. Time is not a 'problem' for God, but it is a problem for humans! Matthew **24:6–8, 48**; **25:5, 19**.

Note that the scriptures emphasise the absolute necessity to be prepared for Christ's return at any moment – and of course he may take any of us at any time!

The Hebrew people will be preserved as a nation in dispersion. At the time of the end, they will return to the land that God promised to them. This has already begun to happen.

Deuteronomy **30:3**; Isaiah **11:10–12**; **60:9**; Jeremiah **30:11, 18**; **31:10–13**; Ezekiel **36:24–36**; **37:1–11**; Luke **21:24** (many consider that the time of the Gentiles has now ended); Romans **11:25** (there will be an increasing turning among Jewish people to their Lord – *Yeshua* [the Hebrew name for Jesus]).

The gospel of Jesus must have been proclaimed across the entire world. This again has now virtually happened. Although not completely fulfilled, this emphasises the urgency of missionary work. Matthew **24:14**; Mark **16:15**.

Many false religions will arise – some in the name of Jesus. Religions will be marked out by their refusal to acknowledge the deity of Jesus, the truth of his propitiatory death on the cross, or the truth of his resurrection from death. Some sects and religions will align themselves with what may be called normative Christianity, although it must be noted that the very term 'Christian' is now inadequate to truly describe the disciples of Jesus. There will be a new emphasis on aligning the religions and preaching that ultimately they are all one, under God. This is a heresy, but will be encountered more and more in the future. Matthew **24:5, 11, 24**; Luke **17:23**; 2 Thessalonians **2:3**; 2 Peter **2:1–3**.

The times of the Gentiles must have run its course. Gentile domination of Jerusalem and the ancient lands of Israel will end – Luke **21:24**. Jesus described the approach of his return as being like *birth pangs*. The pangs arise so we know that something is about to happen. Jesus' explanation of the future is contained in Matthew chapter **24**, which students may want to pause to read in its entirety.

At the time of his return certain things will be happening

Unprecedented calamities – earthquakes and associated societal dislocations, political crises, godlessness, persecution of the true followers of Jesus, whether Jewish or Gentile. These will be unprecedented in the sense that their intensity will increase, there will be more of them and they will happen together. Daniel **12:9–10**; Joel **2:31**; Zephaniah **1:14–18**; Matthew **24:9–10, 21**; Luke **21:11, 25**; 2 Timothy **3:1–5**.

Organised Christianity will be absorbed in the world. There will be global apostasy – a turning away from

Christ to other things. Christian 'religion' will become in different ways cold, formal, asleep, or aligned to other religions. Sadly, the so-called church will be as unprepared for the *Second Coming* as the Hebrew religious leaders were for the *first* coming. In both cases the religious leaders should have been alert and aware. In the past they were not. In the future (present?) they apparently are not. Matthew **24:3–4, 9, 12, 24, 44; 25:1–13**; Mark **13:36**; Luke **17:26–27, 30; 18:8; 21:34–35**; 1 Thessalonians **5:1–6**; 2 Peter **3:3–4**; Revelation **3:15–18**.

There will be a worldwide fear for the future. Luke **21:25–26**.

Some believers will be expecting his return. There will be a hidden remnant that will be ready, waiting and scattered across the world, from all races. Daniel **12:9–10**; Matthew **25:1–3, 8**; Luke **21:35–36**.

There will have been a return to Israel of Jewish people on a large scale. Isaiah **11:11–12**; Ezekiel **37:11, 14, 21–22**.

A global dictator and religious leader will appear. It has been suggested that he may arise in Europe, but we should not be dogmatic about this. He will gain worldwide power. He will be religiously followed – and feared. After being victorious he will have designs upon Israel. This leader may be aligned with, or may be identical to, the apostate leader of a reunited 'Christendom' – the Antichrist. This person may be the ultimate architect of harmonised religion, or out of the religions he may form a new, final, false religion. Daniel **7:8** (the 'little horn' is the Antichrist); **11:36–45; 12:1**; Matthew **24:14–16**; 2 Thessalonians **2:3–12**; Revelation **13:3–18; 19:17–20**.

Again we emphasise in relation to the above that it is unwise to be too dogmatic about the details, but the general outline is plain to see – there will be a global politico-religious leader/ship that is in opposition to Christ – and ultimately this will be destroyed by Christ.

The world will be in the throes of a final great war – a war ultimately against God, involving the Jewish people in some way, and centered on the land of Israel. This is called 'Armageddon'. Israel will be seen as defenceless. Many Jewish people will turn to Jesus (Yeshua) as their Messiah, because of the great distress at that time. But the Lord will have the final word in this. The enemy will not prevail. Ezekiel **38:8–12, 15, 21–22**; Joel **3:1–2, 9–11, 14**; Zechariah **12:1–10; 14:1–9**; Romans **11:26–27**; Revelation **16:14, 16**.

Note Some argue that elements of these prophecies have already passed. Overall this seems not to be the case. But *some* prophecies certainly did have both a short-term outworking, and a second longer-term outworking. Some of the prophecies referred to in this study may be in short- and long-term categories. The short-term outworking would have been in biblical times, but the future outworking is still awaited.

The second coming of the Lord

There are a number of interpretations of what the Bible says. Again we would caution against being overly or destructively/divisively dogmatic about this. What we can say is that the return will be **visible, dramatic and definitive**. It will be a surprise to the world at large – and to many in the church, it seems. To most it will come *like a thief in the night* (1 Thessalonians **5:2–4**). No one expects a thief, or they would be ready for him! The second coming will glorify the Lord. His true Church, his bride – his 'called-out' from all nations, races and tongues – will now at last be triumphant. The precise details are somewhat mysterious but most Bible-believing Christians would generally recognise the following:

Jesus' disciples will be called in some visible, separate way. Luke **17:24, 34–36**; 1 Corinthians **15:51–53**; 1 Thessalonians **4:13–17**.

The Lord's physical return is clear. Zechariah **14:4–5**; 1 Thessalonians **3:13**.

The second coming. Matthew **24:27–31, 39; 25:6, 13, 23–31**; Luke **12:39–40; 21:27–28, 34–35**; Acts **1:7, 10–11**; Colossians **3:4**; 1 Peter **5:4**; 1 John **2:28**.

A period of Christ's rule on earth. Isaiah **11:6–9**; Jeremiah **23:5–6**; Zechariah **14:9**; Revelation **20:1–4**.

The End

The destruction of evil, the judgment, and the end of the present earth. Hebrews **1:10–12**; 2 Peter **3:10–13**; Revelation **20:7–14**.

A new heaven and a new earth. 1 Corinthians **15:24–28**; Revelation **21:1, 4**.

Final prayer – Revelation **22:20** ***Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.***

Further Reading Pawson, D, *Living in Hope* (Terra Nova, 2008) provides a useful study of Matthew 23–24.