

Why Christ Must Return

Scripture: 2 Peter 3:3–10

Code: A339

Scripture is neither vague nor equivocal on the promise of Christ's return. A large portion (by some accounts, as much as one-fifth) of Scripture is prophetic, and perhaps a third or more of the prophetic passages refer to the Second Coming of Christ or events related to it. It is undeniably a major theme in the prophecy of both Old and New Testaments.

And regardless of what the scoffers say, Jesus is coming (2 Peter 3:3-10). World history is barreling toward the conclusion that God ordained. It isn't an end that will come as a result of nuclear war, environmental irresponsibility, or alien invasion; it is the one that comes by the purpose and plan of God, foretold in Scripture. Make no mistake—Christ *will* return!

Here are nine reasons from Scripture by which you can know that Christ is coming again.

The Promise of God Demands It

The Old Testament is full of Messianic promise—that promised is its main focus. From beginning (Genesis 3:15) to end (Malachi 4:2), the entire Old Testament is filled with prophecies of the coming Deliverer—at least 333 distinct promises, by one count.

Of the more than 100 prophecies dealing with the first advent of Christ, all of them were fulfilled precisely, literally. His riding on a donkey, the parting of his garments, the piercing of His hands and feet, and the vivid prophecies of His rejection by men in Isaiah 53—all these *might* have been interpreted symbolically by Old Testament scholars before Christ. But the New Testament record repeatedly reports that such things were fulfilled in the most literal sense, so "that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matthew 26:56; cf. 2:15; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:35; John 12:38; 15:25; 19:24, 28).

Scripture says God "cannot lie" and that He will not change His mind (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2). What He has promised, He will do. The truthfulness of the Bible is at stake in the Second Coming.

The Teaching of Christ Demands It

Christ's earthly teaching was filled with references to His Second Coming (Matthew 24-25; Luke 21). When He was on trial for His life, Jesus defended His own deity with a bold declaration of the Second Coming in the most triumphant terms. He told the High Priest, "You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

On the night of His betrayal, Christ told the disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John 14:2-3). Not only is the credibility of God at stake in the Second Coming, but so is the credibility of His Son. *If Jesus doesn't*

return, He's a liar.

The Testimony of the Holy Spirit Demands It

Since "God ... cannot lie" (Titus 1:2), His promise guarantees Christ's return. Jesus is truth incarnate (John 14:6); so His teaching also infallibly confirms the fact of the Second Coming. And the Holy Spirit, who is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26), also testifies of the Second Coming of Christ through the New Testament writers.

Whether the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 1:4-7; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; etc.), the apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:13; 5:4; 2 Peter 3), or the apostle John (1 John 3:2), again and again, through the inerrant Scriptures, the Holy Spirit adds His witness to that of the Father and the Son—Jesus is coming.

The Program for the Church Demands It

God is currently "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14) and gathering His elect into one great body, the church. The church's role is to be like a pure bride for God's own Son, ready to be presented to Him at His Second Coming.

Paul uses that wedding imagery in 2 Corinthians 11:2: "I am jealous for you with godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin." Marriage is a beautiful metaphor that pictures Christ's love and care for His church (Matthew 25:1-13; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:6-9). And that's why we can be certain He will return to claim her, just as He promised (John 14:2-3). He will come back to get His bride.

The Corruption in the World Demands It

The world is a very wicked place, and when the "Son of Man [comes] in the glory of His Father with His angels ... [He] will recompense every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:27). "An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

That blessed hope of every believer (Titus 2:13) is the terror of the world. For unbelievers, His coming means immediate, impartial judgment (1 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14-15; Revelation 19:11-16); for believers—unmitigated joy! Jesus *must* return in order to execute just retribution on sinners and carry out the judgment He has promised.

The Future of Israel Demands It

In Paul's day Gentiles were coming into the church in greater numbers than Jewish converts, and in Romans 11, Paul reminded them, "You, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree" (v. 17). But the time is coming when the natural branches will be grafted back into the olive tree (vv. 23-24), a phenomenon that Paul expressly connected with the return of Christ (v. 26). That is the day when Israel will mourn over the

One whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10), and God will save them all (Romans 11:26).

The Vindication of Christ Demands It

It is inconceivable that the last public view the world would have of Jesus Christ would be that of a bleeding, dying, crucified criminal, covered with blood, spit, and flies, hanging naked in the Jerusalem twilight. Did you realize that after His resurrection, He never appeared in a public venue before unbelievers? Plenty of *believers* saw Him, touched Him, spoke to Him, and gave unanimous testimony that He was risen from the dead. But there is no record that unbelievers ever saw Him.

But the unbelieving world *will* see His glory displayed to everyone. Scripture says, "Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Hebrews 9:28; cf. Matthew 24:27). The Savior who was humiliated, taunted, and put to death in a public display of humanity's hatred of God will return as conquering Lord in view of the entire world (Luke 21:25-27). And every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7).

The Destruction of Satan Demands It

Satan, though an already-defeated foe as far as Christians are concerned, still exercises a kind of dominion over this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; 1 John 5:19). But Christ is the only rightful ruler of this world, and when He returns, He will overthrow and destroy Satan completely.

In Revelation 5, when Christ receives the seven-sealed scroll, the title deed of the earth, He unleashes judgment with the crack of each seal (Revelation 6-7). The seal judgments give way to the judgment of the seven trumpets ((Revelation 8-9); the trumpet judgments lead to the judgment of the seven bowls (Revelation 16). Finally, after one last-ditch effort by Satan to retain his unlawful dominion over the earth, Christ Himself returns to vanquish the foe—He chains him, casts him into a bottomless pit, and finally confines him to an eternal lake of fire (Revelation 19). With that, Christ's victory over Satan the usurper is complete.

The Hope of the Saints Demands It

Only Christ's glorious, triumphant return can fulfill the hope of the saints—every true believer longs for that day. Paul characterizes Christians as those who "love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). The apostle John says, "Now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). The return of Christ will instantly usher in the fullness of our glorification.

John then adds these words: "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (v. 3). This is the test of a healthy eschatology: Is your hope a sanctifying influence on your soul? Are you looking beyond the commotion of this world with the realization that you could soon meet Christ face to face, and are you preparing your heart and soul for that? Are you eager and watchful? Are you filled with joyful hope and expectation? That is the attitude to which Scripture calls us.

The Second Coming is not supposed to make you stop what you're doing to wait for the Lord's return. And neither should it motivate you to focus all your attention on the events and political developments of this world. Instead, it should prompt you to holiness as you direct your heart toward Christ, whose coming every believer anticipates with joy.

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