

10th Lesson

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS IN THE LETTERS OF ST. PAUL

Readings for the lesson: Isaiah 13:6-12/ Joel 2:28-32 /Zephaniah 1:14-18/Acts 2:14-21/ 1 Thes 4/ 2 Peter 3

Joyful and Trying Days in our daily life: There is always a great deal of emotion in different days of our life. Birth day, the day of baptism, First Holy Communion day, Graduation day, wedding day, the first day of a new job, the day of retirement and other important days bring lot of joy and happiness and we try to relive those happy days by keeping the pictures in our homes. On the other hand, there are some days which give us some sort of fear and sadness in our hearts. For example, the day of losing our job, the day of betrayal, the day of sickness, the divorce day, the day of the death of our loved one, September 11 and so on. These days bring us sadness and we find hard to forget those days. We may have already experienced these joyful and sorrowful day or We might be experiencing right now . But there is one day which we have not yet experienced and that is called “The Day of the Lord”.

2000 References in the Bible on the day of the Lord: There are more than 2000 references in the bible about the first and second coming of the Messiah. The OT speaks of the first coming of the Messiah, as a humble servant. The NT speaks of the second coming of Jesus as the Glorious and Majestic king. The second coming of Jesus is a consistent theme in the NT, especially in the letters of St. Paul and Peter. In the Apostolic Creed we profess “He is seated at the right hand of God the father Almighty; from there **He will come to judge the living and the dead**”

Misleading debates and deliberations on the day of the Lord: Talks and Debates about the day of the Lord have always been and continue to be a very hot theological issue in church pulpits, books and movies. Few evangelical churches, scientists and astrologers often confuse and mislead people by speaking about “the day of the world” instead of helping them scripturally and theologically. There are doomsayers who interpret wars, earthquakes, famines and calamities as signs of the end of the world.

Examples of end time fixations: People have been predicting the end of the world since the first century. St. Paul thought Christ would return in his lifetime. Hippolytus, one of the early philosophers, predicted Christ would return in 500 A.D. In 960, German theologian, Bernard of Thuringia, calculated the end of the world would come in 992. Some were so sure the world was going to end in 1000 A.D. that they did not bother to plant crops. Astrologer, Johann Stöffler, said the world would be flooded on February 20, 1524. Solomon Eccles, in 1665, ran through the streets of London carrying blazing sulfur on his head announcing that the world was going to go

up in flames within the year. In 1874, Charles Russell, founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, concluded that Christ had already returned, but people would have another forty years of grace. In 1914 the denomination was forced to revise its timetable. Herbert Armstrong, in his publication, Plain Truth, set the date for the end of the world as January 7, 1972. The Year 2000, and more specifically, the projected Y2K computer problem, caused many to think that the "end was at hand." Some even claimed that Jesus spoke of Y2K in His Olivet Discourse, using Luke 21:25 as justification: "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves." On September 12th of 2001, a false quotation of the 16th century French astrologer, Nostradamus, spread across the Internet, saying, "Metal birds, striking twin brothers, will mark the end of the world."

End-time fixations are not exclusive manifestations of ancient communities. On October 23, 1844, thousands of Christians sold their earthly possessions, dressed in white robes, climbed to the tops of the highest mountains they could find, climbed to the tippy-tops of trees to get even higher, and waited for Jesus to return. They had been told this was the date by William Miller, a farmer from western New York who dabbled in apocalypticism which led him to declare this as the date of Jesus' return based on his exegesis of the Scriptures. When no one went anywhere but down the mountain, he announced a calculation error. The real date was to be six months later, which also came and went as his followers now went... away... for good. Jim Jones was another apocalyptic leader.

More Doomsday bluffing: Anticipating the end of the world in 1975, twenty-four men, women, and children from Grannis, Arkansas, moved into one tiny house and waited there for ten months. The end did not come as they had expected, and they were evicted for not paying their rent. In 1986 a man named Richard Kieninger of Garland, Texas, organized a group of people to survive the calamities of the end of time. On May 5, 2000, Kieninger's followers planned to witness the last day from a dirt pile. Similarly in 1525, a German preacher named Stoeffler predicted the end of the world by flood. All of his parishioners built boats and rafts to survive the end. When the flood did not come, they threw Herr Stoeffler into a deep pond. Such was the case on October 22, 1844.

What is the day of the Lord? The day of the Lord is the common phrase in the OT and in the book of Joel (2:1,11,31; 3:14). It always refers to some extraordinary happening, whether a present event (like locust plague) or an event in the future (like the destruction of Jerusalem or the defeat of enemy nations) or the final period of history when God will defeat all the forces of evil. The last judgement on all evil and sin and the final reward for faithful believers. It includes both punishment and blessing.

How ancient is this doctrine of Christ's coming? Jude 1:14-15 "Enoch, of the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied also about them when he said, "Behold, the Lord has come with his countless holy ones o execute judgment on all and to

convict everyone for all the godless deeds that they committed and for all the harsh words godless sinners have uttered against him.

How does Job see the second Coming of Jesus in his book? Job 19:25-27 “As for me, I know that my vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust. This will happen when my skin has been stripped off, and from my flesh I will see God: I will see for myself, my own eyes, not another’s, will behold him: my inmost being is consumed with longing.

How does David speak of Christ’s coming? Psalm 50:3-5: “*Our God comes and will not be silent! Devouring fire precedes him, it rages strongly around him. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth to judge his people: “Gather my loyal ones to me, those who made a covenant with me by sacrifice”*

Ps. 96:12-13 “*let the plains be joyful and all that is in them. Then let all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord who comes, who comes to govern the earth, To govern the world with justice and the peoples with faithfulness.*

JESUS AND HIS SECOND COMING

What does Jesus say about his coming? Jesus comes again. In John 14:3 we read “And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back again and take you to myself**, so that where I am you also may be.” Matt. 16:27. “For **the Son of Man will come** with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct”

Matt. 24:30 “**And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”.**

Luke 9:26 “**Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels**FOR what purpose did Christ say He would come again?

At His ascension, how did the angels say Christ would come again? Acts 1:9-11 “*When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”*

What part will the angels have in this event? Matt 24:31 “And he will send out his angels with a trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

Who knows the day of the Lord? No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mt 24:36). It is God the Father's secret to be revealed when he wills. No one can predict by Scripture or Science the exact day of Jesus' return. Therefore let us not calculate the day rather let us be prepared for the day whenever it comes. **In view of this fact, Christ tells us to be vigilant. In Matt 24: 42** "Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come" "The proper attitude of a Christian is to be always looking for his Lord's return."-D. L. Moody

What warning has Christ given concerning false views of the manner of His coming? Matt. 24:23-26 "If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told it to you beforehand. So if they say to you, 'He is in the desert,' do not go out there; if they say, 'He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it"

What promise did Christ make concerning His coming? John 14:1-3 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be"

What are the signs of his coming? Luke 21:25-28 "*There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand*" Revelation 1:7 says "*Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him. Yes. Amen*"

Why many will not be prepared for this great event? Matt. 24:48-51 " But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is long delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and drink with drunkards, the servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

What will the world be doing when Christ comes? Luke 17:26-32 "*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man; they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage up to the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Similarly, as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; on the day when Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from the sky to destroy them all. So it will be on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, a person who is on the housetop and whose belongings are in the house must not go down to get them, and likewise a person in the field must not return to what was left behind. Remember the wife of Lot.*"

What is the point that we need to know? The idea is, eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, or building is not wrong in itself, but when people's minds will be full of these things, they will give little or no thought about their future and they will not make any plans or preparations to meet Jesus when he comes.

ST. PAUL ON THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

The first-century Christians had expected Jesus to return during their lifetime. When some died before He came back to the earth, they were concerned and confused. To encourage them, Paul appeals to their faith in Jesus' resurrection and the promise of a resurrection of the faithful when He returns. It is not a secret event. 1 Thes 4:16-17 reads, *"For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord"*.

With trumpets and angels declaring Jesus' return, this is hardly the description of something done secretly. In Matthew 24:30 Jesus says that at His return people from all over the earth will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. In Revelation 11:15 we read that the seventh trumpet will sound and a loud voice will proclaim that Jesus will rule the nations of the world forever. These passages describe the same event: the dramatic, powerful and very visible arrival of Jesus Christ when He returns to take control of and rule over all the nations. There is no passage to support the teaching that He will approach the earth secretly to snatch away believers to heaven and then return again after the Tribulation.

Meet the Lord in the air: When Jesus returns, He will come to the earth and He will rule over the earth (Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 11:15; Zechariah 14:1-4). Those who "meet the Lord in the air" won't stay in the air with Jesus, but will come down to the earth with Him. when Jesus returns, faithful believers who had died will be resurrected and those still living will be changed to spirit. They will rise together into the clouds to greet Jesus as He is returning and escort Him to the earth where He will begin His reign.

Will some be left behind? Those who are ready spiritually will be taken with him and those who are not will be left out. Matthew 24:40-41 "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left." The point is that since we will not know when He will return, we must be ready for it at all times. He urges us not to be oblivious as people were before the Flood. Instead, we can be spiritually prepared for Jesus' return. But still, He warns, there will be some who are prepared and others who are not. In verse 42 Jesus makes the point: "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." And in verse 44 He concludes the thought: "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Warnings of troubled times, but no promise of rapture. There are many prophetic warnings about the end of

this age. The apostle Peter said that knowing the times that are ahead should motivate us to live “in holy conduct and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). Jesus in Matt 24:21-22, warns us that since we don’t know the timing of His return, we ought to take heed, watch and pray.

Is the second coming of Jesus a secret one? No. Revelation 12:13-14 describes in symbolic language the Church being protected from Satan during the time of the Great Tribulation. But they aren’t taken in a rapture, and they don’t go to heaven to be protected. In all the prophecies of the end of the age and of the return of Jesus Christ, there is no indication or even a hint that He will swoop near the earth to secretly snatch away believers, leaving the rest to suffer the anguish of the Great Tribulation. His return will be visible, and His followers will be with Him as He descends to the Mount of Olives to begin His thousand-year reign here on the earth. Revelation 20:4 reads “Then I saw thrones; those who sat on them were entrusted with judgment. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image nor had accepted its mark on their foreheads or hands. They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years”

What is the day of the Lord according to St. Paul? 1 Thessalonians 5:2 “For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night”. Paul uses the figure of a thief to emphasize the unexpectedness of the second coming, thus warning his readers to be ready for its occurring at any time (1 Thes 4:15). If they heed his words, then it would not come as a surprise to them (Luke 21:34–36; 1 Thessalonians 5:4).

St. Paul calls the second coming of Jesus as a blessed hope: But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). “as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Those who were faithful to God will receive **a crown of righteousness. In** 2 Tim. 4:6-8, St Paul says, “For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, **the just judge, will award to me on that day,** and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance.

What Christian grace are we exhorted to exercise in our expectant longing for this event? St. James in 5:7-8 says “*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand*” Some believe the Jesus’ coming will be secret to steal believers out of this world in a secret rapture. The false teachers in the early christianity not only flouted Christian morality they also denied the second coming of Christ and the judgment. They sought to justify their licentiousness by arguing that the promised return of Christ has not been realized and the world is the same, no better than it was before. St. Peter strengthens the faithful against such errors by reminding

them the OT events. Just as God destroyed the earth by water in the flood, so he will destroy it along with the false teachers on judgment day (7). St. Peter says that Jesus' coming is definitely neither a silent nor a secret event. Rather, that will arrive suddenly with a great noise.

ST. PETER ON THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

We read in 2 Peter 3:3-10 “ Know this first of all, that in the last days scoffers will come [to] scoff, living according to their own desires and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming?From the time when our ancestors fell asleep, everything has remained as it was from the beginning of creation.” They deliberately ignore the fact that the heavens existed of old and earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God; through these the world that then existed was destroyed, deluged with water. The present heavens and earth have been reserved by the same word for fire, kept for the day of judgment and of destruction of the godless. But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard “delay,” but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.

Be vigilant: To be ready for the second coming, we need to maintain our relationship with him. We maintain this relationship through daily study of the scriptures, prayer and witnessing. As we stay connected to Christ, He is able to bring the righteous fruits into our life “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. Jesus calls us in Luke 21:34-36 “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man” The second coming of Christ is the hope of all believers both living and dead (1 Thessalonians 2:19). Therefore we need not despair when loved ones die or world events take a tragic turn. God will turn our tragedies to triumphs, our poverty to riches, our pain to glory, and our defeat to victory. All believers throughout history will stand reunited in God's very presence safe and secure.

The teaching of the Catholic Church: Many small Christian churches and denominations center on the book of revelation to speak about the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus. But the Catholic Church focuses more on the prophecies of Jesus given in the gospel of Mathew. In the Gospel of Matthew (Ch 24), Jesus describes certain signs that will precede his coming. Some of these include wars, plagues and persecution of Jesus' followers. Catholic teaching sees these as signs that the Second Coming is near. Yet Catholic Church also believes

that these signs have been present since the beginning of the apostles' time. Because of this, Jesus could come at any time. But let us neither be in panic nor panic others because the Lord is in control of our life.

How to understand and respond to the day of the Lord? When we read and hear about future threat or danger, they panic us more. As believers, we need to look at these disturbing images, signs and events as given by our Lord himself to straighten our life and the life of those who are entrusted to our care with holy and healthy thoughts, words and deeds. The end of the world should never be thought of as depressing or frightening because we are in the hands of a good and loving God who journeys with us in the trials and difficulties of life through his eternal word and life giving Eucharist and the teaching of the holy church. ***It is not only a day of Judgement but also a day of salvation for the believers.***

1) His first coming as a redeemer was with his flesh and blood. 2) His second coming would be at the end of time. But he is coming into our lives each and every moment. Hence let us be awake and watchful because his arrival is certain although we don't know the time.

St. Francis of Assisi, Saint of Nature, was hoeing his garden one day. A philosopher friend approached him and asked, "What would you do if you learned you would die before the sun sets?" St. Francis reflected for a moment and replied, "I would finish hoeing my garden. I would be faithful to what I am doing now."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor and theologian, was asked by critics, "Why do you expose yourself to all this danger? Jesus will return any day and all your work and suffering will be for nothing." Bonhoeffer said, "If Jesus returns tomorrow, then tomorrow I will rest from my labors, but today I have work to do. I must continue the struggle until I am finished."