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## Celebrating the return of Christ

We all have special days marked on the calendar.

- I have all of my family's birthdays marked.
- All of the national holidays are marked (because I get off of work).
- Christmas is coming! We're less than 30 days away!
- I've marked my wedding anniversary, like any good husband would do.
- We all mark the calendar with important dates.

This morning, I want to talk about a date that is unlike any other date in the world. And that is the day that the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is coming back!

**That day that is clearly marked on God's calendar.**

This will be the biggest event in all of history!

- It will mark the culmination of thousands of years of praying, "Lord, Jesus, come! Come and set things right! Come and eliminate sin!"
- This is a day that all Christians look forward to where Jesus will come again and bring all things and all history to its proper conclusion.

**Q: Why do Christians look forward to that day?**

A: One reason is that we see the impact and the hurt that sin brings.

Every difficulty that we are all faced with, points back to sin.

There is unexplainable disease.

- I've got a neighbor that had lung cancer and never smoked a day in her life! **Sin has caused disease.**

Maybe a sudden death of someone close to you.

- I've got a very close family member that took his own life because of depression. **Sin impacts our thinking.**

Turn on the news. On a world scale, sin explains such things as genocide, war, cruelty, and other abuses. **Sin wants us to be god-like.**

Selfishness is rampant! Which means that there are selfish people in the world that hurt us or friends/family.

- Whether we meet them on the street or in business or if they somehow invade our family... people are selfish. **Sin is selfish.**

And, if we're being honest, we ourselves can be incredibly self-centered!

- We often choose sin!

- Because of the sin nature in us, we are drawn to things that are displeasing to the Lord.
- Our sin will intrude upon our finances, our relationships and it wants to create a division between us and our relationship with God!
- **Our own sin impacts our us physically, emotionally and spiritually.**

As Christians, we see sin clearly!

It's the very reason we came to Christ... because Jesus has offered us the gift of paying the cost of our sin!

So, this date marked on God's calendar, the second coming of Christ is a pivotal part of God's redemption story for us.

- Because of **Jesus' death on the cross**, we are a forgiven.
- Because of **his resurrection from the dead**, we have of hope.
- And, because of **his second coming**, we are people with a home and a future.

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**So, the second coming of Christ will be our focus this morning.**

- Grab a Bible (one in the pew) and let me take you to a few verses that you may find helpful.
- Or, you may want to jot down a few references to look at later.

People are often surprised to learn that there are actually more bible reference for Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming than there are for His first.

- More than 1800 Scriptures point to this event (that's more than 8x than his birth).

**For example,**

In the first chapter of Acts, Jesus was speaking with the Apostles on the Mount of Olives and from here, he ascended into heaven.

The Apostles stand there, shocked, with their mouths open. It says,

*"...(Jesus) was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. <sup>10</sup> As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. <sup>11</sup> "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday **he will return** from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"*

500 years earlier, the prophet Zechariah spoke about how Christ would return to that very spot. He wrote,

*"A day of the Lord is coming... (and) on that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two... Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.  
It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the Lord.  
The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name."*

In Psalm chapter 2, God say that the nations would bow down to Jesus and he would rule over them. It says,

*“I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. <sup>9</sup>You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”*

That didn't happen at his first coming... but, it will happen at His second coming!

In Isaiah 9:6, it says that,

*“the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

That didn't happen at his first coming... Jesus was certainly not considered a “Prince”... but it will happen at His second coming!

In John 14, we hear from Jesus himself about his return. He says,

*I'm going to go away but “I'm going to prepare a place for you. And if I prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”*

He was a carpenter on earth and he continues that work in heaven.

**There are hundreds of Scriptures like these that point us forward and give us the promise that Jesus will return and set things right!**

- No more disease, no more sinful thoughts, no more selfishness.
- Revelation 21:4 says it best,  
*“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

That is a date on God's calendar that I am looking forward to!

A day unlike any other date in all of history!

**Do you look forward to that day? Do you pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!”?**

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I began our time this morning by asking the question,

**Q: Why do Christians look forward to that day?**

- And, I said that one reason we look forward to it is because we see the impact and the hurt that sin brings.

But there is a bigger reason that we should look forward to Christ's return.

- **Because it glorifies God!**
- **Without the return of Christ, His Gospel message is incomplete!**
- **Christ coming back is the climax to God's story of redemption.**

Let's turn to the book of Revelation, chapter 4.

- We're going to look at some passages that show us the events that happen **just before** Jesus' return.
- Then, we'll look at **the details of the very moment** of His return.

**FYI:** The book title "Revelation", in some Bibles is called, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

- Some call it "the Book of Apocalypse" which literally means **an unveiling**.
- So, this book is the Revelation, or unveiling of Jesus Christ.
- It's primary theme can be found in chapter 22, verse 7 where Jesus says, "*Behold, I am coming soon!*"
- That's the main point of the book!

Here in chapter 4, we are standing before the throne of God.  
And, by the time we reach this moment, tension is building...  
Something big is about to happen...

In verse 5 it says that,

*"From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder."*

Everyone around the throne is deep in worship, v8, saying,

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."*

In verse 11, the 24 Elders lay their crowns at the foot of God's throne and say,

*"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power..."*

**Next**, we see Jesus standing before the throne.

God is about to give him the authority (that we read about earlier) to return and reign on earth.

It comes in the form of a scroll...

- Think of the scroll as the title deed to earth.
- It has been mortgaged off to satan long enough and Jesus is about to take it back.
- He is the only one that is worthy to open it, because only Christ can redeem us.

Look at 5:9,

*"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. <sup>10</sup>You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

There is a similar passage written 700 years earlier, prophesying this moment.

In Daniel, chapter 7, he wrote,

*"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him."*

Daniel saw the events of Revelation 4, when God gave Jesus the authority to do this!

- Jesus was given the scroll to open... the mortgage has been paid and Jesus is redeeming the earth!

Do you see how God has a plan?

- Do you see how the story comes to a climax and is driven home upon the return of Christ?
- **This date on God's calendar will complete the Gospel and it glorifies God, the Father.**

**Sidenote:** You know, a lot of people in this world will say they worship God (the Father).

- But, not many say, "I worship God the Son... Jesus."
- Warren Wiersbe says, "To ignore Christ is to insult the Father."
- I agree.

Because someday, (as we are learning), EVERYONE will fall at the name of God's son and when they do... it will glorify God the Father.

Phil 2:10-11 says,

*"...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Back to Revelation...

- In chapters 6-18 it describes 20 different judgments that are cast down on earth.
- These are final warnings to the world that say, **come to Christ!**
- God uses these "judgments" to shake people loose from their self-righteousness.

**Then, we get to the good stuff... chapters 19 & 20.**

In case you want to come back to this later... three things are recorded in these two chapters.

- **Christ's return (today's focus),**
- The end of satan,
- The great white throne of judgment

Chapter 19 opens with 10 verses of the "Hallelujah choir". Let's just look at verses 1 and 2, *"After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, <sup>2</sup>for true and just are his judgments."*

Q: Why are they singing, Hallelujah?

- *Because sin is being judged,*
- *Because God is reigning,*
- *Because the marriage of the Lamb has come.*

Then, in verse 11 we finally come the very moment of Christ's return!

John writes,

*“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

This description of Christ is thrilling! We are seeing the glorified Christ!

It says that *“on his head are many crowns”*.

The Greek word, here, for crowns is *“diadema”*, which refers to a ruler’s crown.

- In the OT, it was customary for victorious kings to gather the crowns of the kings he defeats.
- So, this is likely a reference to Christ’s conquering of the world’s nations.

About His army: They consist of 1) masses of angels, 2) all of the OT saints, and 3) the church (that’s you and me).

And, look at what they’re wearing. Verse 14 says,

*The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.*

Who wears clean white clothing into a battle.

Where are the army fatigues and camouflage?

The point here is, no member of Christ’s army will do battle.

- Not one of us will lift a finger.
- Jesus will do all of the fighting with the truth of His spoken word.
- Look again at verse 15,

*“Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.”*

When Jesus first came to earth, He came as a baby, in humility.

- He rode a donkey into Jerusalem to be crucified.
- Here, Jesus comes in power, as a King, riding a horse, coming to reign!
- He isn’t wearing a crown of thorns... He now wears a conqueror’s crown!
- **He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords!**

As I said earlier, this will be the biggest event in all of history!

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Everything that we are reading, here in Revelation, is from Heaven's perspective...  
Turn with me to a couple of passages that give us a picture of Christ's return from earth's perspective...

From earth's perspective, this event may not look like such a good thing.

- As Christians, we are thrilled to pray for the return of Christ... we have a deep desire for Him to "set things right."
- But, for those that have not come to Christ, it means something very different.
- Because His return means bringing justice to the world.
- "Eliminating all sin" means that God's wrath will be poured out.

Turn back to Revelation chapter 1. Look at verses 7-8,

*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.*

There's a similar verse in Matthew 24:30 (turn there).

These are the words of Jesus, while sitting at the mount of Olives, he says,

*"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*

*(42)...keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."*

There are a lot of passages in the Bible that talk about "being ready" or "keeping watch" because Christ's return will be very sudden.

I can remember as a kid, probably 12 years old, hearing the question, "What will you be doing when Jesus returns?"

- That question really bothered me!
- Because I had not yet surrendered my life to Christ.
- I knew that there were many things that happened in my life that I would not want Jesus to walk up on.
- The HS was convicting me of sin, because I was worried that Jesus could come back at an inconvenient moment!

That's what this passage says here, that Jesus *"will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn."*

- Why? Because, just like me as a kid, the unsaved... the sinful nations will get caught without any "coverage", no forgiveness, no redemption.
- They will realize the time of their judgment is here!

It was about 13 (about a year later) that I came to Christ and confessed all my sins. And, I received Him as my Savior.

- But, we can't go through all of this text without asking the question, "What about you?" Does the sudden return of Christ worry you?
- Have you thought about the fact that someone will have to pay a price for your sin?
- It's either going to be you paying the price (in Hell), or it's Jesus paying it for you, so you may go to heaven.
- **Think about it.**

When we accept Christ as our Savior, as our "rescuer" we understand,

- That the first time Jesus came, he came to deal with our sin.
- The second time he comes to rescue us from the wrath of God's judgment.
- Christ bought the first time what he gives the second time—safety from judgment.

**We look forward to the return of Jesus because,**

- **We see the impact and the hurt that sin brings.**
- **And, secondly, because it glorifies God!**
- **It is the climax to God's story of redemption.**

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So, here we are, 4 weeks away from Christmas.

You would think I might bring a message about Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> coming, his birth!

But, both of these events are huge!

**Q: How familiar are you with the term "Advent"?**

- If someone asked you to define or explain what Advent was, could you?
- Personally, growing up, I had never been taught anything about Advent.
- We didn't celebrate it, we didn't talk about it. It was an unknown to me.
- I would've probably said something embarrassing like, *"I don't know, it has something to do with Christmas."*

Now, I'm sure that all of you already know what Advent is, but just in case there are 4 or 5 of you that don't, let me explain it.

Advent is what we call the season leading up to Christmas.

**It's a season of waiting...** looking forward to what is coming!

In fact, the word "Advent" means "coming" or the arrival of something.

- Christians throughout the world have different ways of celebrating it.
- Some light candles, some sing songs.
- Some have calendars or cardboard houses 30 little windows that have a Bible verse inside, opening one each day.
- There are many different ways to celebrate and create a sense of anticipation for the coming celebration of Jesus birthday.

It's been a thing for hundreds of years! Some say it started as far back as early as the 400's!

The roots of Advent are found in the example of the people of Israel.

- For centuries, they were waiting and hoping and praying as they anticipated the coming of the Messiah.
- So, for the 30 days before Christmas, it's as if we're re-enacting that "waiting" as we wait and look forward to Christmas.

*(Now, if anyone is asked about Advent... you've been protected from suffering any embarrassment! You are welcome.)*

But, let's get back to the message of the second coming.

Here's the interesting part.

- Yes, Advent anticipates the coming of Jesus in Bethlehem. The arrival of our Messiah.
- But, for the Christian, it has two other perspectives:
  - The reception of Christ in our heart AND anticipation for the second Advent or coming of Christ!

When the Israelites were in exile, they were waiting and hoping and praying with expectation for the coming of the Messiah.

- They looked back on how God had moved in their lives to lead them out of Egypt, and they called on God to again act for them.
- In the same way, today's church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ's birth, while at the same time looking forward and pray for the second coming where he returns for his people.

We've got 30 days before Christmas.

To balance the two pieces of remembering and looking forward, would you,

- 1) take the first two weeks and pray/read/talk about how exciting it will be when Christ returns?  
And then,
- 2) take the last two weeks to look back and dwell on Christ's first coming.

**By doing this, I believe that our worship will be deeper, our witness will be stronger, and God will get all of the glory!**

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**PRAYER**

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As you leave here today, go out and celebrate Christ and all he's done for you!  
And, know that you are loved.