

Written Copy For: "What Christ Says is to Come on the Last Day"

Mid-Week Advent #3

Wednesday, December 18th, 2019

Text:

Revelation 20:11-12

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

Matthew 25:31-34

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

Revelation 21:3-4

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Focus Statement:

Jesus became sin for us and because He Himself knew no sin He was the perfect sacrifice for all men. In the Gospel as presented through the Word and Sacraments He works to create and sustain faith and repentant hearts. He keeps us ready for His return at any time.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

When Jesus returns life as we know it will suddenly end. There will be no time to "get right with God" There will be no opportunity to plead your case. The state of your heart upon death or at Christ's return is the deciding factor on where your eternal destination will be

What the hearer should do as a result:

Since we have no idea what day He will return and no time to prepare ourselves or loved ones we should faithfully make use of the means of grace through which the Spirit keeps us prepared. And through our words and actions witness the Gospel that is the means of preparation for the lost.

Subject Sentence: Jesus keeps us ready for His anytime return

We've covered over these two previous Wednesday evenings false assumptions and teachings about Christ's second Advent, His second coming on the Last Day. We've established that there will be no Secret Rapture where He will remove the Church before things become really bad. Instead we, the Church are to remain and suffer through all that is to come and thus remain faithful witnesses.

We looked at what Jesus had to say to His Disciples in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 about what to expect during the times and the days leading up to His return. We also looked at what Revelation reveals to us symbolically about what must happen before Jesus return. That the millennium, the 1000 years mentioned in Revelation is a symbolic number meaning the complete amount of time that must pass until all is accomplished in keeping with the Father's will. That John in Revelation looks at this time period from three different perspectives so that Revelation agrees with Jesus personal testimony in Matthew and Luke that He will return only once more.

The Gospels and Revelation reveal that nature will increasingly work against mankind through natural disasters. That man's inhumanity toward man will increase as Jesus told us in **Matthew 24:10,12** ¹⁰ **And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.** ¹¹ **And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.** ¹² **And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."** The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse who symbolically describe man's inhumanity to his fellow man are already riding and affecting a portion of the world, and will continue to do so until the end.

Also the Devil and his demons will persecute mankind-both believers and unbelievers. Satan does this only through the permissive will of Christ and therefore cannot do all that he desires to. He would love to crush the Church and stifle the proclamation of the Gospel. But he has been symbolically bound and thrown into the bottomless pit where his power to influence and control evil men is limited. But **Revelation 20:7-8a** has a warning for us: “**7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog**” As we draw closer to the end our reprieve from intense Satanic attacks will end. This time period is called “Satan’s Little Season”. It is a limited period of time when he and his demons will be allowed to gain control of human institutions and governments and turn them against the Church in an attempt to persecute and, if he were allowed, wipe us out. This is mainly warfare of a spiritual nature, but it may have a physical-temporal side to it as well.

Now, Satan well knows that if he were simply to send in evil men and shoot up churches and kill all those assembled, he would not realize his goal. When Christians die, they have won. Jesus comforts us and confirms this truth in His words to the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43 “**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.**” When we die, we are beyond Satan’s ability to tempt and turn us from faith. But he is not above using the threat of the Christians own death or, even better, the death of a loved one to attack our faith. As we look back in the history of the Church, we can see a foreshadowing of this when Rome was persecuting the Church in the Apostle John’s day. The emperor tortured Christians or their loved ones demanding they recant their faith. Christ commissioned John to write Revelation so that the Church might know that despite how things may looked,

Jesus was still ruling and protecting His Church, and those who remain in faith to the end win. The victory Christ won over Satan at the cross is the final victory and that will be the final word on the Last Day.

The devil will do more than put pressure on the Church from the outside. He will be allowed to attack it from within through the office and person of the Antichrist. As Jesus Himself warns us in **Matthew 24:24** **“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”** As the Apostle John warns us in His first Epistle (**1 John 2:18-19**) **“¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.** How should we recognize the office, work, and person of the Antichrist? **1 John 2:22** **“²² Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.”** His purpose will be to turn the Church and its faith in salvation by grace through faith in Christ to any other name under heaven. Or simply to make it Jesus plus: anything else. Those who are weak in their faith, who do not make use of the means of grace provided through regular worship and Bible Study are his target. But whatever means he can use he will try to make your eternal future that of his own.

Some Theologians, as they look at what the Church is beginning to suffer now, and the persecution already underway for our commitment to faith in Christ alone, and our refusal to accept sinful lifestyles as God-pleasing, have speculated that we may already be at the

beginning of “Satan’s Little Season”. But we are cautioned by Jesus proclamation that no one will know the day or the hour, and therefore we may only be able to recognize this in hindsight.

Jesus has revealed that there will come a definite and particular day in history. A “Last Day” after which there will be no more days. All that we use to mark the passage of time: the sun, the moon, the earth itself and its rotation, all that will disappear. Reality as you and I know it will end. As **Revelation 20:11** describes it: **“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.”** **Revelation 6:12-14** ¹² **When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.”** On this day all that you see, all that you possess, and all that you know here on earth will be gone. The earth, the solar system, the universe, all that composes reality will vanish. All that will be left is mankind and Jesus.

With time no longer existing one cannot give a list of what will happen sequentially. In fact these things may happen all at once. **Mark 13:24-27** ²⁴ **“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from**

the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.” All will see Jesus at His second advent. All will see Him for who He really is, God the Son. **2 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.**” He will return visibly and will gather to Himself His Church.

Matthew 24:30-31 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.** ³¹ **And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”** When He comes all the tribes of the earth, all those who refused to believe in Him will mourn. **Revelation 6:15-17** ¹⁵ **Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,** ¹⁶ **calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,** ¹⁷ **for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"** They will know that it is too late for them to believe and that their fate is sealed, they will face God’s wrath over sin.

But we, who have held fast by faith, if we are still alive for this day will have a different reaction. **Luke 21:28** ²⁸ **Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”** We will rejoice because His return means for us the fulfillment of all that has been promised to us by faith.

Satan and his demons will have a different reaction. **Revelation 20:9-10** ⁹ **And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,** ¹⁰ **and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**” All those evil forces that persecuted the Church will be destroyed. There will be no final cosmic battle called Armageddon. Before Satan and his demons can actually strike Christ will return, and they will be toast.

His return will be marked by a bodily resurrection of all those who have previously died.

John 5:26-29 ²⁶ **For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.** ²⁷ **And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.** ²⁸ **Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice** ²⁹ **and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”**

Those who have done good-the believers, will be raised again to enjoy the resurrection of life. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17** ¹³ **But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.** ¹⁴ **For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.** ¹⁵ **For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.** ¹⁶ **For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of**

the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ 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, and so we will always be with the Lord." We who have died, who were sealed in our baptismal faith, whose souls have been resting with Christ, return with Him and are reunited with our bodies, raised from the grave. They will be resurrected glorified bodies, like Jesus resurrected glorified body, made perfect, made to live forever, with all the sinful imperfections that plagued us in our former life gone.

But what of those who died without faith? Who died refusing the free gift of grace? They died still in their sins. Their souls which have been consigned to a place apart from Christ, and which have already begun to suffer what will be their lot eternally, will also be reunited with their bodies. Their bodies will not be made perfect. But they will have bodies in which they must face the King and Judge they ignored and disobeyed throughout life. **Revelation 20:12-15** "¹² **And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.** ¹³ **And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.** ¹⁴ **Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.** ¹⁵ **And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**" All those who refused to believe will stand before Christ. On exhibit are all the sinful thoughts, words, and actions that marked their life of sinful disobedience. They may want to bring up those things they consider good works. But even though their fellow man might consider their donations to the Church,

their service at the Soup Kitchen on Thanksgiving and Christmas to be good works, Jesus does not. **Hebrews 11:6** explains that “**And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**” Without faith in Christ a person has no good works. Without faith in Christ their name is not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life Without faith the final word from the judge will be as Matthew 25:41 testifies: “**...Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.**” An eternity of suffering in body and soul for all the sins against God they refused to let Christ cover.

And what of those who lived and died in faith? **Matthew 25:34** “**Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'**” Their names are written in the Lamb’s Book of life because they received and kept the faith given in the Gospel. They have no sinful works that will be mentioned when the books are opened before the altar. All that we have done that offended God has been washed away in our baptism. On the cross Jesus paid in full all our offenses. And the proof of that is in His resurrection, which foreshadows our own. What will be mentioned are those thoughts, words, and actions that were the outpouring of the Fruit of the Spirit. Those things that Christ’s love in our heart moved us to do. By themselves they would not be worthy enough to deserve eternal life. But through our faith in Christ and His gift to us in Baptism all that we do that is tainted with sin is washed clean by His blood. He makes our works worthy. And it is His work for us in His life, death, and resurrection that have earned for us this most wonderful gift.

John describes what he saw concerning this day prophetically in **Revelation 21:1-4** “¹

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,

coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God

is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself

will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and

death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain

anymore, for the former things have passed away." This truly is our hope in the midst of

the temptation and suffering and sadness of this world.

What should this all mean to you and to me? What should you take home from this? **2**

Peter 3:10-13 “¹⁰ **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ¹¹ Since all these**

things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of

holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,

because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly

bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new

heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” We are not to hold fast to our

lives lived here and now so that we forfeit our faith in Christ and our hope of the

resurrection. We should treasure this gift of faith we’ve been given. We should realize what

an awesome gift it is. And we seek to keep that faith alive through our participation in

Word and Sacrament worship and our study of God’s Word.

Then we may rest easy in Jesus promise to His disciples and to us in **John 14:1-6** **"¹Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** He has prepared a place for you in eternal life. When He returns it is to take you home into the newly restored creation of the new heaven and the new earth. His free gift of love to you now. May you hold fast to it now and forever. Amen.