# The Lord’s Coming for His Church Luke 12. 35-37; John 14. 1-3; 1 Thess. 4. 13-18; Rev. 22. 20.

Let us organize our study of this vital topic as follows:

*1. Its certainty*

*2. Related events*

*3. What it means to Christ*

*4. What it means for us*

*5. What should be our response*

### 1. Christ’s Coming - its certainty

To the believer, 'The promise of His coming' is surely one of the sweetest of all His good promises! Let us remind our hearts of certain matters in respect of the certainty of the promises of God generally:

1. God cannot lie. Titus 1. 2 '...in hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began'

2. None of His promises have ever failed historically (1 Kings 8:56). No mere pious sentiment on Solomon's part!

3. That Christ will come again is one of the *unconditional* promises of our Lord Jesus Himself, John 14:3, 'if I go, I will come again and receive you unto Myself.

2. His apostles speak with one voice on this great subject.

**Paul:**  'The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout'.

**John:** 'Abide in him that when he shall appear we may have boldness'.

**Peter:** 'Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'.

**James:** 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord'.

A. T. Pierson computed more than 350 references in the NT to the Lord's return! The early church’s life was dominated by the expectation of it . . . and no Christian can afford to neglect this sanctifying truth.

### 2. Related events

The coming of the Lord for His church is the first of a *series of related events*:

1. **The ‘rapture’ of the saints,** 1 Thess. 4:13-18. The **snatching away** of His people (the term 'rapture' = ‘caught up’ = Acts 8. Spirit of God *caught away* Philip). There is both ***power*** and ***urgency*** implied in this word.

2. The following **events of ‘the Day of Christ’** – a Pauline term for the presence of Christ with His people: e.g. the 'Judgement seat of Christ', the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19. 9).

3. The **judgements of God** on the world of the ungodly during the Great Tribulation period (Rev. 6-19).

4. The **Millennial** (1000 year) **reign of Christ** over the regenerated earth (Matt 19:28) And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

How narrow our horizons often are!

The soul who loves God and Christ will savour every future event of the prophetic programme which will exalt and vindicate Him in the world where he was rejected and cast out.

### 3. What it means for our Lord

1. His coming for His church will be wonderfully personal:

'the Lord himself’ will descend from heaven with a shout'.

1. It is the object of His longing desire

John 17. 24.'Father I *will (= desire)* that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory’.
What about us? Do we today share His ardent longing?

1. Object of His Love and Joy

God could say concerning Israel: Isa 62:5 *For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.*

Similarly in the NT:Eph 5:27 *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

All His previous actions, His sacrifice, all the applications of His cleansing word to our hearts have this great objective in view.

**4. What it means for believers**

1. **He will come to consummate our salvation**

Salvation has its ‘tenses’ - past, present, and future

Past - to the ‘little children’, 1 John 2. 12, John wrote 'your sins *have been forgiven* you for His name's sake'

- we stand in the present good of having had our sins forgiven.

Present - to us who *are being saved* [the preaching of the cross] is the power of God (1 Cor. 1. 18). We no longer labour under sin’s tyranny.

Future – Rom. 13. 11, 'now is *our salvation nearer than when we believed'.*

1 Pet. 1. 5 'kept by the power of God though faith unto *a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time'* .

The present experience of salvation, genuine and glorious as it is as nothing compared to the glory which shall one day burst upon us!

1. **He will come to raise the dead in Christ**

Far from being left out, the dead in Christ shall ***rise first***. He will come with military commander’s shout, voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God.

The summons heard at the grave of Lazarus and will be heard again, with its effects seen on a vast scale.

## The joy of reunion: 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words', 1 Thess. 4. 18.

1. **He will come to transform our bodies**

'Who shall change our lowly body (body of humiliation), that it may be conformed to the body of His glory', Phil. 3. 21.

'Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body', Rom. 8. 23.

'We shall be like Him', 1 John 3. 2.

**NB** freedom from illness etc. is not the present purpose of God – to teach this is an error and deviation from clear NT teaching. The redemption of the believer’s body *awaits* the Lord's return from heaven.

1. **He will come to reward faithful service**

This will take place at the ‘Judgement seat of Christ’, Rom. 14. 10-12, 1 Cor. 3. 10-15, 4. 1-5; 2 Cor. 5.10.

### 5. The believer's response

Future events foretold in scripture are never intended merely to fuel mere debate or wild speculation. Instead, they should have a ***sanctifying effect*** on our lives in the here and now.
Questions – where it gets personal:-

1. What does the Lord’s coming mean practically?

The ***characteristic attitude*** of the believer in the NT is that of:

1. Patience: waiting for God’s Son from heaven, 1 Thess. 1. 10.
2. Vigilance: looking for the Saviour, Phil. 3. 20, Heb. 9. 28

 *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto* ***them that look for him*** *shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

**Past generations** of Christianswould often arise in the morning and when drawing the curtains back be heard to say 'perhaps today!'.

*Have I an object here below Which would defer thy coming Lord?*

*From it O Saviour set me free To watch and wait and yearn for Thee.*

2. Are we *growing* together?

How could we claim to be waiting for Christ's coming and yet be engaging in things which will not bear the scrutiny of His piercing gaze? What will He find us doing when He comes? At loggerheads with our brothers and sisters? I hope not!

1 John 2: 28 *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed from before him at his coming.*

1 John 3:3 *'Every man that hath his hope set upon (Christ) purifieth himself even as he is pure*'.

2 Cor. 5. 9 *‘We make it our aim that whether present or absent to be pleasing to him’* .

His great objective is that I should be conformed to His likeness: that needs to begin and progress even now. Surely we have a lot more growth to achieve before He comes?

3. Are we *evangelizing*?

We should note that often those passages which speak of *waiting* for Christ also speak of *working* for Him. (Matt. 25, 1 Thess. 1 etc)

The Lord hasn’t put us here simply to yearn to ***escape*** a prison! He has left us here purposefully -- as in a harvest field.

John 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

What about our friends, neighbours, and loved ones? If we are genuinely saved the awful plight of the lost will move us to witness: ***'They knew not*** till the flood came and took them all away'. Matt. 24. 39.

[Less than 2% of the British population attend church regularly . . .

What a challenge! what a mission field all around us!]

Our little day of service on earth will soon be closed for ever.

Listen to the Master who said 'I must work the works of him that sent me whilst it is day: the night cometh...'

Luke 12:35-37 gives us Christ's directions in the light of His promise:

***Let your loins*** be girded about (active service / pilgrims ready to leave at any moment)

***Lamps burning*** (illumination of truth: personal and collective testimony)

Like unto men ***looking for their lord*** (watchfulness, expectancy)

 *'With such a blessed hope in view We would more holy be*

*More like our blessed glorious Lord Whose face we soon shall see.'*

Marana’tha! the Lord is coming!

Soon He will say, ‘*Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away’*, S. of S. 2. 13. Our hearts surely respond ‘*Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus’*.