

# THE224 Christian Narrative 2 Redemption

## Unit 6a The Return of Christ

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Hello and welcome to Session 6A of Christian Narrative 2. Today we'll discuss the return of Christ. Our main teaching point for today is that just as Jesus Christ departed from the earth, so will he return. Basically, what we want to do as we begin to talk about the end times is really focus on the return of Christ that we find. If you remember in the passage in the Book of Acts, we see Christ ascending to heaven. And one of the things that the angel tells us is that so as he has left, so he will return. And that's kind of what we want to look at today. Let's start with this idea that God himself is eternal. We read in Revelation 21:6 that "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." This description of God being eternal is very important for us as we begin to talk about end times because while we are bound in time, and we'll see this as we continue to talk about God's eternity, God is not bound in time. And so while the future is uncertain to us, this is not the same case with God.

In fact, Isaiah 46:9-10 show us that God actually sees all time, from beginning to end. And that's why we read that Revelation 21 passage. So it says in Isaiah 46, "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" So God really is able to see all of time from beginning to end. And not just time itself, but actually the events that occur within time. We see this in Acts 17:30-31. "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by the raising of him from the dead."

So the times of ignorance God has overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world. There is a day coming. He knows the time in the future when he will actually come and judge all people. So from God's vantage point, the future is determined. While it is uncertain to us, it is not so with God. We read in Revelation 1:8, again, "'I am the Alpha (the beginning) and the Omega (the end),' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come.'" Right? Past, present, and future. God is the beginning and God is the end of all things. John 1:1, "In the beginning was..." The Word already existed in the beginning. "And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Isaiah 44:6, "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god." So God is eternal.

Now, let me kind of lay this out for you. I'm a visual learner, so here's a good way to look at a theology of time, if you will. God transcends time itself. He exists in eternity. So there was a time when time did not exist. Time is a created thing. So as you see in this illustration, God exists before time began. God exists after time comes to a conclusion. This means that God will be at the beginning. God will be at the end. And we can see that God overlays all of time. This is how God is able then to understand the beginning from the end because time for God is a fixed thing. He exists outside of time and therefore is able to see everything that occurs within it.

Now, we continue to talk about the changeless nature of God by understanding that God's plan does not include the eternal presence of a curse, and therefore, God will fully remove it. Revelation 22:3, "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him." So there is going to come a point when God is going to deal with the curse of sin fully and finally. He ultimately dealt a death blow at the cross, but we still see the effects of sin beared out in our world today. But even that, the effects of sin will be dealt with at one point in the

future. So when the curse is fully dealt with, redeemed humanity will once again be able to see the face of God. Consider that for a moment.

Revelation 22:4, “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” Redeemed humanity will bear the name of God on their body. We just read that, but also Exodus 28:36-38, “You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the Lord.’ And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts. It shall regularly be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.” How interesting that in the Old Testament, in the covenant, in the temple, in the cult of Israel, there is this place where Aaron bore the sign of God on his forehead, and yet when we look towards the very end, we see that every individual will literally carry the name of God in their body, that we will be identified as God’s holy people. And the holiness of God will actually illuminate the whole world. Revelation 22:5, “Night will be no more. There will not be a need for light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign (with him) forever and ever.”

So here’s what we know. God is timeless. He is above time. Events within time, even in the future, are fixed. God is changeless. He understands and makes plans, and those plans do not change. Those plans include humanity. Those plans include creation. Those plans include the removing of the curse of sin. So now we turn our attention to the return of Christ. What we discover in Scripture about the return of Christ is that the return of Christ would be sudden, personal, visible, and tangible. Now, there’s a lot of passages there. I want to read through a number of these because they deal with one of these four things: the suddenness, personalness, visibleness, or tangibility of the return of Christ. Matthew 24:44, “Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” It would be sudden. John 14:3, “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.” It’s personal. It’s tangible. Acts 1:11, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” It will be personal. It will be visible. 1 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.” It will be sudden. It will be visible. It will be tangible.

Hebrews 9:28, “So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” Sudden and personal. James 5:8, “You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” It will be sudden. 2 Peter 3:10, “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.” It will be sudden. It will be tangible. 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” Visible. Personal. Revelation 22:20, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” Sudden. Personal. Revelation 1:7, “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.” The return of Christ will be sudden. It will be personal. It will be visible. It will be tangible. And we need to recognize this. This is part of God’s plan. We should not be surprised by it.

Now, what we're going to see in the rest of this lesson is that the return of Christ is talked about throughout the Scriptures. It's not just the Book of Revelation that we look into to understand the return of Christ. As this past kind of compilation of Scriptures bore out, we have Matthew and John and Acts, Thessalonians, Hebrews, James, Peter, John, Revelation. I mean, think about the authors. You have Matthew is writing and John is writing and Luke is writing and Paul is writing. James is writing. Peter is writing about this. This is a significant topic to the New Testament writers.

Now, what else can we know about the return of Christ? Well, the time of his return is known to God but unknown to us. Mark 13:32-33, "Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come." "Therefore," in Matthew 24:44, "you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." Luke 12:40, "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming" when you will not expect him. Okay. So we don't know the return time of Jesus Christ, even though that is known to God. And as we expect, we already heard him in those passages, Christians are called to anticipate and be prepared for his return. Titus 2:12-13, "Renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 16:22, "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed" because our Lord is coming. 1 John 5:19, "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."

We are called to anticipate the return of Christ. So Christ is coming. It's going to be a sudden, personal, visible, and tangible return. We don't know when that time is coming, but we are called to anticipate and prepare and be ready when he comes. So let us look at some of the things that we can expect to see before he comes. First of all, and this is an important one, the return of Christ will be preceded by preaching to the nations. Two passages that are really important. They sometimes get read over because they're not necessarily wrong, but they're really important to the return of Christ. Mark 13:10, "And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all the nations." And Matthew 24:14, saying the very similar thing, "This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." One of the core roles of the church is to proclaim the gospel throughout the whole world and therefore usher in the return of Jesus Christ. If you desire to see Christ return, if your prayer is to see Christ's return, then preach to the nations because as we preach to the nations, we bring back the king.

We also know that the return of Christ is imminent, that it is at hand, that there's not a whole lot that needs to take place in order for Christ to return. And we again see many passages that talk about this reality that the return of Christ is not far off. So we read in Matthew 24, "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Luke 12:40, "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." 2 Peter 3:8-10, "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that they should reach repentance. 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.”

We see (these are just a couple of those passages, and you can read them all) that there’s a reality that Christ is returning and that his return will be quick. So our main teaching point has been this: that just as Jesus Christ departed from the earth, so he will return. I hope that in this lesson you’ve seen a number of important points. First of all, I hope you’ve seen that God is in complete control. He’s outside time, unlike we are. We are bound within time. Therefore, we don’t know what will occur tomorrow. But for God, it simply isn’t the case. God is beyond time, and so the days of tomorrow and the days after that, they are fixed for God. He knows those days and the events of those days. And as such, the return of Christ has been fixed. God is changeless. His plan has always included humanity, creation, and the removal of sin. And so, at some point in the near future, God is going to send his son Jesus Christ back. And when Christ returns, just as he departed from this earth, he will right all the wrongs. And we’re going to continue to talk about this in Session B and C as we continue our dialogue about the ends of times or the consummation of all things, the restoration of all things.

And so we have to see this. And we have to see that we are, as the body of Christ, called to be prepared. We are called to look towards the coming of Jesus Christ, to anticipate it, to live lives that actually bring him back. This isn’t something passive that we are to fear. This isn’t something passive that we are to ignore. This is something active, something to which we are to be engaged in. I hope that you see throughout the plethora of Scripture that we’ve read that God expects you and I who are followers of Christ to be engaged in bringing Jesus Christ back, preparing for his kingdom, anticipating his kingdom, preaching the gospel. Furthermore, I hope that you’ve seen through this lesson that the topic of consummation or the restoration of all things, that the discussion of end times really is not just something that we take from the Book of Revelation, but really the whole of Scripture, particularly the New Testament anticipates the return of Christ. And so we’ve looked throughout almost all of the New Testament writers discuss at some point and at some length the return of Christ. If it’s important to all of them, it must be important to us. We need to consider the reality that Jesus Christ departed from this earth. And so as he departed, so will he return.