



Foundations
Explore Scripture

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The Second Coming

The entire biblical narrative rushes forward to a single point of climactic beauty. Jesus will return to receive the church as His eternal bride.

WHY WILL JESUS COME AGAIN?

In biblical times, when a man was in love with a woman and wanted to make her his wife, he would engage in a pattern of matrimonial customs common to that culture. First, was the wooing phase, in which he would respectfully interact with the woman in such a way as to draw her to himself and discern if her interest was mutual. Once drawn to him, they would enter into the courtship phase, an exclusive relationship in which they would grow in their love for one another. Then, once the proposal was made, the man would depart from his beloved back to his family, comforting her with the promise of his soon return and the assurance that he was only departing for the purpose of preparing a place for her in his father's house. Once the preparations were completed, he would return for his bride, marry her, and take her to the place prepared for her to be with him for the rest of her life.

In various passages of the Old Testament, God portrays Himself as a pursuing lover and a hopeful husband to His covenant people. *Explore and discuss this rich imagery in the following scriptures:* Isaiah 54:5; Ezekiel 16:4-8; Hosea 2:19-20.

Against this beautiful matrimonial backdrop, it is not surprising, then, that when Jesus came into the world John the Baptist viewed Him as "the bridegroom" who had now come for His "bride" (John 3:29). As the public ministry of Jesus unfolded, multitudes were attracted to Him. As His ministry was coming to a close, Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32).

Draw!

Not push, not force, not require or demand, but draw!

This is the language of love. Jesus died on the cross, bearing our guilt, to reveal how deeply He loves us in the hope that the beauty of His love would attract us to Him as the divine Lover of our souls.

Shortly after announcing His intent to draw humanity to Himself by the display of His love at Calvary, Jesus had a conversation with His disciples in which He invoked the matrimonial customs of their culture:

“Let not your heart be _____; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many _____; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to _____ a _____ for you. And if I go and _____ a _____ for you, I will _____ and _____ you to _____; that _____ I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3).

Jesus is returning to Earth for one reason: because He deeply, passionately, ardently loves us and wants to spend eternity in intimate fellowship with us. The Second Coming of Jesus will be the great climactic event of human history and the ultimate matrimonial consummation of Christ’s faithful love for His church.

When the apostle Paul talks about marriage he uses it as a symbolic springboard to describe the love of Christ for His church. Read Ephesians 5:25-33 and see what additional insights you can draw regarding the love of Jesus for His people.

WHEN WILL JESUS COME AGAIN?

Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus pronounced a heartbroken lament over Jerusalem and simultaneously foretold His second coming:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Matthew 23:37-39).

The disciples were understandably troubled and perplexed by such a negative prophetic outlook for Israel, so they called Jesus’ attention to the impressive “buildings of the temple.” Jesus responded by saying, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Curious about both the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming, the disciples asked Jesus a question:

“Tell us, _____ will these things be? And what will be the _____ of Your _____, and the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:1-3, KJV).

In response, Jesus proceeded to outline at least nine signs that will precede His Second Coming. Read Matthew 24:4-14 and list these signs:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Of course all of these things have been going on throughout the world from the time of Christ to the present. So the events themselves are not especially unique. But in verse 8 Jesus explained how these kinds of events will constitute signs of His second coming: "All these are the beginning of sorrows," He said. The Greek word here translated sorrows is *odin*, which literally means "birth pains," as it is rendered in the English Standard Version. There are two characteristics of labor pains: they become more *frequent* and more *intense* as the time of delivery draws closer and closer. By employing this symbolism Jesus has informed us that while things like pestilences, famine, war, and natural disasters have always afflicted the world to some degree, they will become more frequent and more intense as the time for His return draws near.

Also, in 2 Timothy 3:1-15, the apostle Paul offers a list of 20 indicators to let us know when the Second Coming of Jesus is drawing near. Read the passage and discuss how these kinds of things are increasingly defining our world's popular culture in more and more open and pervasive ways.

HOW WILL JESUS COME AGAIN?

After His resurrection Jesus met with His disciples to outline the mission of the church to proclaim the good news of God's saving grace to the world: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). After speaking these final departing words, "while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (verse 9). Now read verses 10 and 11 and discuss how the angels described to the disciples the "manner" of Jesus' Second Coming.

To further construct a clear picture of the manner in which Christ will return, allow the following scriptures to answer a series of questions:

How many people will witness the Second Coming of Jesus? Revelation 1:7

Describing the "appearing" of Jesus, what word did Paul use to indicate that it will be a spectacular visible event? Titus 2:13

According to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, what will happen to "the dead in Christ" when Jesus returns?

And when Jesus returns, where will the resurrected saints and "those who are alive" at the Second Coming "meet the Lord?"

How many of the holy angels will attend Jesus at His Second Coming? Matthew 25:31

Most importantly, how will Jesus distinguish those who are the sheep (the saved) from those who are the goats (the lost) at His Second Coming? Matthew 25:32-46

Connect

The God of Scripture is the faithful Lover of our souls.

The Song of Solomon is a prophetic love song that offers a unique window into the love of Christ for His church. Verse by verse expressions of devoted love are exchanged between Solomon and his bride-to-be, the Shulamite. They describe one another's virtues and beauties with lyrical dexterity, compliment one another with exuberance, and ache with passion to be with one another. And just as we're thinking that this is just another one of our world's silly love songs and wondering why it's in the Bible, at the climactic point of the song the Shulamite says to her beloved, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised" (Song of Solomon 8:6-7, ESV). Suddenly, we are led to realize that the deepest form of love known to human beings—that which exists between a bride and her groom—whispers to our hearts of the very love of God Himself for our souls. Dying on the cross, Jesus did, indeed, reveal to us a quality of love that is stronger than death and which no force in our world can quench (Romans 8:38-39). This is the beautiful Jesus who has promised to return to Earth and take us to be with Him forever.

Experience

Yes, I look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus as a bride longs for her lover's return.

What a remarkable thing it is that Jesus was willing to die on the cross to demonstrate His love for me, and for all of us! As a faithful bride, may we as His church love Him in return and be ready for Him when He comes to receive us into eternal fellowship with Himself.