

## Sermon – 05/11/2006 pm

### Christ is Coming

Study Text: Revelation 1:7-8

‘Within our lifetime sea level could rise up to 10m, unless we do something now to stop climate change’. We have heard many dire predictions like this in recent days. They are not coming from ridiculed religious leaders or doomsday prophets, but from scientists and politicians. ‘The human race has never faced a greater threat to its very survival than climate change’ claimed one politician.

While we are to be good stewards of this earth which the Lord has given us (Psalm 115) we must remember two things. Firstly, the present earth and heavens will pass away. They are reserved for fire. The elements will melt in the heat (II Peter 3). Secondly, the greatest event in the history of the human race has already occurred.

Our salvation is not in the hands of scientists and politicians but in the hands of Jesus Christ who died on the Cross some 2000 years ago. What we should be concerned about more than anything else today is his coming again. This will not be slow like climate change but sudden and much more catastrophic.

*Behold, He is coming on the clouds and every eye will see him (1:7).* This is the word of God revealed to John. Jesus is coming again. He is coming to judge the world in righteousness – and no man or nation has the power to stop him. But there is a way out. You can escape this disaster that will be unparalleled in the history of the world, even the flood in Noah’s day. *He who hears my words and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment* said Jesus (John 5:24).

By all means let us stop polluting the atmosphere, whether or not it is causing climate change. But take heed that those who neglect these words of Jesus are facing a greater peril than rising global temperatures and sea levels.

Some are using the word ‘apocalypse’ to describe what the world faces if we do not halt this climate change. But do these people know what this word means? It comes from the Greek as we see in this book called Revelation. It means unveiling. For some this future is horrific (6:16), but for others it means salvation (Hebrews 9:28). John was not writing a message of doom to the churches but a message of hope, a message of victory in Jesus Christ.

### Come

John’s greeting to the seven churches in Asia (Turkey) concludes with a reminder that Jesus, who died and rose from the dead, will return. This is not a new revelation. Daniel had a vision of *one like the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13)*. Jesus spoke of his return in a similar manner – *they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30)*. And after his ascension, angels told the disciples *this same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11)*.

When the Lord spoke to Moses, and made his presence visible among his people, he came down in a cloud. A cloud came down on Mt Sinai when the Lord spoke, and a cloud came down on the tent of meeting whenever Moses went there to meet with the Lord. A cloud came down on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured and his glory revealed (Luke 9:34).

Clouds can be white and wonderful, or they can be black and fearful. Have you ever been in a cloud? In the Himalayas where we often stayed we used to watch the monsoon clouds. They would build up in the valley then come up the mountains and right in our window if it was open!

You may have gone through the clouds while flying. As the plane gets higher and higher suddenly everything goes white. When through the cloud you can look down and see the fluffy white tops of the clouds. If they are dark storm clouds your experience will be different. In fear you will cling to your seat as the plane is tossed about in the turbulence.

Jesus ascended through the clouds into heaven and he will come again in like manner. As a believer you will be looking forward to that day. Revelation ends with Jesus saying *surely I am coming quickly* and with the believers crying *even so, come Lord Jesus!* Those who seek to live holy lives in Jesus Christ look forward to that day and seek to hasten his coming (II Peter 3:12). Is this your perspective on life? It is a very different perspective from that of the world!

## See

As I drove to Newcastle recently I saw a hot air balloon or blimp in the sky. It was advertising some product. Some advertisers even take to writing in the sky to tell us about their product. Thousands, even millions of people can see this writing in the sky. Then of course there is the sun and the moon that half the world can see at one time – telling us of God our creator!

We do not know how every eye will see Jesus when he comes but that is what this Scripture tells us (1:7). It is not profitable to speculate as some do. One person told me how satellite TV would enable Jesus to be seen by everyone in the world at one time! I told her that Jesus, who created the world, would hardly rely upon human technology to be seen. Let us focus less on technology and more Jesus, who is the only way of salvation.

Jesus is coming once and every eye will see him. There will not be multiple comings, as one college lecturer told his students. Jesus' coming will not be in secret as some not-so-secret, self-styled students of the Bible tell us. Jesus will not be coming just for a select group of Christians. Maybe such people get confused about the 'thief in the night' simile. The thief comes when you least expect him so be ready, is the lesson of this simile. You will surely know when the thief comes and cleans out your house!

*Even they who pierced him* will see Jesus when he comes. The prophet Zechariah (12:10) wrote similar words some 600 years beforehand. The immediate reference here is to the Jews and the Romans who conspired to crucify Jesus. They pierced his hands and feet, and they pierced his side. The Jews will finally acknowledge that the one whom they crucified is the Messiah or Christ.

*They who pierced him* may have a wider reference to all those who have pierced Christ by their disobedient lives and rejection of him. Millions living today would have done just what

the Jews and Pilate did to Jesus. They still in effect crucify the Son of Man by rejecting him as their saviour. All people, all races, all generations will acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord when he comes in power and glory (Phil 2:10). Both the elect and the non-elect will see him on that Day.

## Mourn

*All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him* (1:7). This truth was also declared by Zechariah, in the very same verse (12:10). ‘Ordinarily this idiom would mean that the crucified one has become the object of their sorrow i.e. they are grieving because they have crucified him’. But there is no indication of such grieving in this book. Therefore we are to understand that Christ is not the object of their grieving but the occasion of their grief.

They will mourn for themselves. They will mourn when they see the consequences of their unbelief. But it will be too late. There will be no repentance, only mourning. Jesus truly is King. ‘Let us hide’ they will say, ‘let us flee the wrath of the Lamb’ (6:16). But there will be no place to hide. All tribes, all people, will weep and wail as they face the Judgment – unless Jesus has taken their punishment for sin.

Those who believe in Jesus, those standing firm in the face of persecution, those eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus will not mourn but rejoice. Their suffering will be over. They will join believers from every age and from every nation around the throne in heaven. They will worship the Lamb on the throne forever and ever.

This greeting ends with the Lord declaring Himself to be Him *who is, who was and who is to come, the Almighty* (1:8). Some say that this refers to Jesus but it is God the Father, God the Almighty who is still speaking. The Almighty (Greek. *pantokrator*) means the all-ruler and all-powerful One.

He is *the Alpha and the Omega*. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. So he is *the beginning and the end*. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In the end the heavens and the earth will pass away. When Jesus returns a new heaven and new earth will appear, the home of righteousness for the covenant people of God.

What does the apocalypse mean to you? Are you looking forward to the day when Jesus returns in power and glory, or will you mourn because of Jesus? Are you living and working to hasten that great day? Are you praying every day – *even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

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