



The Return of the Lord Jesus to the earth

READINGS FOR THIS LESSON - Acts 1 and 2 Thessalonians 1.

Jesus' death and resurrection



About 2000 years ago, Jesus was crucified. His followers were sad and confused. All their hopes had been placed in him - now he lay dead in the tomb. But on the third day he rose again. They must have remembered the words he had spoken to them before his death,

"I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy". (John 16:20).

They would have been very happy to see their beloved Lord and Master again. John tells us,

"The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20).

It is hard for us to imagine how glad they would have been.

Jesus taken up to heaven

Now read the first eight verses of Acts 1, again. Think how happy the apostles must have been during those 40 days, when Jesus was amongst them once more, as their teacher. At the end of those 40 days they stood with Jesus on the Mount of Olives. Suddenly, he was taken up from them into heaven. As they watched him being taken up from the earth, he was hidden from their sight by a cloud. Once more they were without their Lord. But this time they were not sad or confused. Luke tells us that,

"While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:51-52).



The secret of their joy

Why were they so joyful after Jesus had gone into heaven? Firstly, because Jesus had made them a promise saying,

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

So they knew that whatever happened he would be caring for them.

Secondly, while they were watching him go into heaven, two angels came to them with the message

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11).

This is a very important verse. Try learning it by heart. As the disciples went back to Jerusalem to preach the Gospel, they knew for sure that Jesus himself would come back to this earth. For these reasons they were very happy.

The words of Jesus

Jesus went to heaven nearly 2,000 years ago, and still hasn't come back. But he **will** come. He said so himself in Luke 21:27

"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Remember that Acts 1 says that he left in a cloud, and that the angels said he would come "in the same way" as they had seen him go up?

Many of Jesus' parables speak of his second coming. For example, the parable in Mark 13:32–37. This speaks of a man leaving his home for a long time, and putting his servants in charge. They were to carry out their duties and watch for his return. He warned them to always be prepared for his sudden return.

"Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come" v 33

In his very last message in the book of Revelation, Jesus said

"Yes, I am coming soon." (Revelation 22:20).

The witness of Peter

Not many days after Jesus had gone into heaven, Peter was in the Temple in Jerusalem. He spoke confidently to the Jews who had been responsible for crucifying Jesus. In Acts 3:19-20 we read

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you — even Jesus"

Peter also spoke of the second coming of Christ in a letter, which he wrote later to believers. In 2 Peter 3:4, he warned them of unbelievers, who would say,

"Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

You may have heard people talk like this.

Perhaps you will hear them say, "They've been saying Jesus is coming back for a long time, but he hasn't come yet", and they sometimes add, "He never will".

But God has promised to send Jesus back, and we know that God will keep His promise. Peter goes on to say, in 2 Peter 3:9 and 10,

*"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord **will come** like a thief."*

The witness of Paul

Jesus himself appeared to the apostle Paul, and sent him to preach to others. Paul claimed that the gospel he preached was given to him by Jesus Christ. Paul taught about the second coming of the Lord. For example, in Acts 17:31, Paul says

"For he has set a day when he (God) will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Paul wrote two letters to the believers who lived at Thessalonica. They consist of eight short chapters, and the surprising thing is that Paul mentions the coming of Jesus in **every chapter**.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, he speaks of the resurrection of the dead at Jesus' coming.



"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first"

In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, Paul tells how Jesus will come to

"...give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."

Here he speaks of Jesus Christ coming to punish some – but we also read, that he will give relief to those who are troubled. If we are wise, we will study God's Word, and prepare ourselves now for his coming.

When Jesus said,

"Yes, I am coming soon." (Revelation 22:20) to the apostle John, he replied,

"Come, Lord Jesus."

Let us be like John, and make this the prayer of our hearts!

Summary

1. Jesus Christ is coming back to the earth.
2. We can be quite sure about this, because he said so himself.
3. This was also taught by the angels, Peter, Paul, and John.
4. If we are wise, we should prepare now for his coming.