

# LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CHRIST RETURNS

For centuries the religious world has been inundated with exaggerated opinions as to what happens when Jesus returns to the earth, commonly called “the second coming,” which is better translated “*the second appearing*.” Hebrews 9:28: “So Christ also having been offered once to bear the sin of many, will *appear a second time* for salvation without reference to sin to those who eagerly await him.” I Timothy 6:14: “keep the commandment without reproach until *the appearing of our lord Jesus Christ*.” (Also II Tim. 1:10, 4:1, 4:8). Jesus said, “I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you. After a little while the world will not see me, but will you see me” (John 14:18, 19). He is saying he will return in Spirit. The Lord is the Spirit (II Cor.3:17). There will be no literal seeing Jesus until *the second appearing*, but he is understood through the Spirit which he promised would remain with believers, also, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *We will come and make our abode with him*” (John 14:23). They will be present in the Spirit. “You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you’” (John 14:28). Jesus returned in spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and as the head of the church, his body, he will remain here in spirit until he is *revealed* in person on the last day. Jesus is physically in heaven as our mediator (I Tim. 2:5) and spiritually on earth dwelling in his people (Rom. 8:10; John 17:23, Gal. 2:20).

When Jesus appears the second time, “*We know that when he appears, we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is*” (I John 3:2). John had seen Jesus the man during his earthly ministry, and after his resurrection; he had seen him ascend, but now he says, “we will see him just as he is.” Christ is revealed symbolically in Revelation 1: 13-16: “I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to his feet, and girded across his chest with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like white wool, like snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and his voice was as the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword and his face was like the sun shining in its strength.” John says, “we shall see him just as he is” that is in his glorified state, and wonders of wonders, he says, “we shall be like him.”

Colossians 3:4 states: “When Christ, who is our life is *revealed*, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.” When Christ appears the second time Believers will be changed by being given spiritual bodies in the resurrection (I Cor. 15:23, 44). Our present natural bodies will be replaced with spiritual bodies. The Apostle Paul says this is the redemption of our bodies: Romans 8:23-25: “...we ourselves having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.” This is our hope. Contrary to popular Catholic doctrine and engrained Protestant teaching, none of it takes place until Christ returns. After discussing the great faith of the Old Testament saints, the Hebrew writer states: “All these, having gained approval through their faith, *did not receive what was promised because God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they would not be made perfect*” (Heb. 11:39, 40). They all died in faith, as in verse 13,

and will remain dead until Christ appears, and the dead are raised. We, along with them will be granted immortality at the same moment in the future resurrection. This is the fulfillment of our hope. The devil has reduced the Christian hope to a vague empty promise of heaven when we die. This happens only when Jesus returns.

When Christ returns his people will be *glorified with him* (Rom. 8:17). In Romans 8:30 the Apostle Paul states: “Whom He predestined these He also called; and whom He called He also justified; and whom He justified these He also *glorified*.” Although Christians have been “called” and “justified” they have not yet been “glorified” although this is spoken as something that has already happened. Glorification means full and entire deliverance from sin and evil. In verse 17 of this chapter the Apostle said since we are children of God we are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ if indeed we suffer with him in order that we may be *glorified with him*.” Christ is already glorified and we shall be glorified because we are in Christ and for this reason God looks upon us as having already been glorified even though we have not yet experienced it. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones in his *Exposition of Romans* quotes Dr. James Denney as saying, “the tense of the word glorified in this passage is amazing. It is the most daring anticipation of faith that the New Testament contains.” Lloyd-Jones then goes on to say, “In a sense there is nothing at all daring about it. The Apostle has been given a revelation concerning this, so no daring was involved. But looking at it from the human standpoint, it is indeed a most daring assertion and affirmation; nothing goes beyond it in the whole range and realm of Scripture.” The word “glorified” in this passage is the end result of “those whom He also “predestined”. The predestination in this verse is explained in verse 29: “Predestined to become *conformed to the image of His son*.” Being “conformed into the image of His son” has already begun in the life of the Christian: “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:18). Further: “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6). Philippians 3:20-21 is the explanation of final glorification: “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself.” We can conclude that being “glorified” simply means our resurrection, which is true, but our being glorified means much more. Resurrection does not mean going to heaven or escaping death, rather we will by being “transformed into conformity with his body of glory” be prepared to share as fellow heirs in his glory (Rom. 8:17). This is why the redemption of the whole creation is shared with the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:18-23). We will have a new status in God’s redeemed creation.

When Christ appears the second time there will be a judgment of all men. I Timothy 4:1...“Jesus Christ, who is to judge the living and the dead by his appearing and his kingdom.” A word that seems to sum up both the anger and the judgment of God is the word “wrath.” Paul speaks of Christ’s return as “the day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22) which seems to point to the final day of

judgment. When Paul faced the heathen philosophers in Athens he stated: "Men everywhere should repent because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Peter stated: "...this is the one who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42). The eternal judgment day of all men has been "fixed" and "will come just like a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2). The Psalmist declared: "He will judge the people with equity...for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness" (Psalm 96: 10, 13). One fact about the coming day of God's judgment that is overlooked and misunderstood by many Christians is the fact that there is a difference in the judgment of Christians and the judgment of the unrighteous when Jesus returns. Jesus said: "I say unto you he who hears my word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). God's people will not be judged for their sin at the last judgment, for God has already judged and punished them in the death of Christ on the cross. Jesus became our substitute and suffered the full penalty of our guilt; "the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7) and "surely our grief's he himself bore and our sorrows he carried...he was pierced through for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities...the Lord laid all our iniquities upon him" (Isaiah 53:4-6). God will not exact payment for what Christ paid for when "he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (I Peter 2:24). However, in writing to the Christians in Corinth Paul stated: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for the deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). A parallel passage is I Corinthians 3:11-15: "No man builds upon the foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay straw, each man's work will become evident, for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains he shall receive a reward. If a man's work is burned up, he shall suffer lose, but he himself shall be saved, so as through fire." The Believers judgment is threefold: At the cross they were judged as a sinner while Jesus took their place and bore the punishment. Today we are judged as sons, being chastened by our Father when we need discipline (Heb. 12:4-8). At the judgment seat of Christ, when he returns, we will be judged as a servant, giving full account of our Christian service. This is for our reward, not to determine our destiny,

The destiny of the righteous is said to be immortality at the resurrection (I Cor. 15: 51-56) and the destiny of the wicked is said to be destruction II Thess. 1:7-10: "When the Lord Jesus will be *revealed* from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus will pay the penalty of *eternal destruction* from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he comes to be glorified in his saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed." I Thess. 5:3: "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then *destruction* will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." Phil. 3:19: "...they are enemies of thee cross, whose end is *destruction*." Yet it is argued that "destruction" does not really mean destruction. The Psalmist wrote: "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of

the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they vanish; like smoke shall they vanish away" (Psalm 37:20). "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall be no more; and you will look carefully at his place, and he will be no more." (verse 10).

On the subject of man's eternal destiny many profess to believe what the Scriptures say but proceed to give words a meaning corresponding to their perceived ideas and do not accept them for what they actually say. The Scripture states: "Who (God) alone possesses immortality" (I Tim. 6:16), and it is at resurrection that the Christian who is mortal "shall put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53). Yet we are dogmatically taught that man has an immortal soul. When we read that "the soul that sins shall die" Ezek. 18:4, 20) and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), we are told "death" does not really mean "death" and only the body dies and the soul is ushered immediately into heaven or hell. It is at funeral services that we are assured that "our loved one is in heaven because they are not really dead." Billy Graham in a daily newspaper column entitled *In My Opinion* states: "The Bible suggest that those who've entered heaven before us actually may know what is happening on earth" however, the scripture says "the dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Psalm 115:17) and "the dead know not anything...for there is no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol where you are going." (Eccl. 9:5, 10).

The crucial choice every man has ever made in this life, when Jesus returns, is either receive the wages of sin, death; or receive the free gift of God, eternal life (Rom. 6:23). This choice is expressed in many ways in the New Testament. To note a few, the choice is between: Life and destruction: "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and way is narrow that leads to life and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). Repentance or perish: In comparing the Jews with the fate of the Galileans Jesus said, "I tell you unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:1-5). Eternal life or wrath and indignation (anger of God, Heb. 3:10, 17): God "who will render to each person according to his deeds: those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality; eternal life, but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth but obey, wrath and indignation" (Rom. 2:6-8). Death or eternal life: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our lord" (Rom. 6:23). Death or life and peace: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). To die or live: "For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Rom. 8:13). Obeying the Gospel or eternal destruction: (as already stated) "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven ...dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (II Thess. 1:7-9). Receiving the love of the truth or perishing: "...the lawless one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan...and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they received not the love of the truth so as to be saved" (II Thess. 2:9, 10).

This is the well-known (in both Testaments) the awful Day of the Lord in which He will pour out his fury upon those whose choice was not to submit to the teachings of Jesus. Luke 21:22 speaks of this time as the day of vengeance to the unbeliever. But to the believer it is the day of his final redemption.