

8. The Coming of the Messiah 2nd Coming of Christ

In our last study on the topic of the Second Coming, we talked about the great tribulation saying that it is a time of persecution for those Jews and believers in Christ who will not take the Mark of the Beast and worship his image. What will keep the people of God trusting in the midst of persecution? It will be our knowledge of the prophecies of the Word of God. There will be a heightened expectation of His coming to right the wrongs of injustice and evil that will be going on at the time. Those of the Church experiencing persecution will not be under any doubt as to what is happening in the world. The already fulfilled prophecies of Jesus, Paul, John, and the Old Testament prophets of events of the first three and a half years, plus the exact timing of the Abomination of Desolation happening right at the mid-point of the seven year period will wake up many to the reality of the war between God and Satan. The facts of Bible prophecy being clearly fulfilled will bring many to Christ in that time frame. God will fulfill His promises to us. As believers are being persecuted they will hold in their hearts His precious promises that He is waiting to celebrate with His bride, and with each days passing, we will be closer to His coming. He said to His disciples:

“I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom” (Matthew 26:29).

There is coming a time when He will come and take us to Himself in a marriage covenant. Those that are experiencing that difficult time will each day wonder if that very day is the day of His coming, for the Great Tribulation period (Matthew 24:21) will not last the full 1,260 days, because it will be “cut short.”

“If those days had not been **cut short**, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

The elect, those that are born-again of the Spirit of God are caught up (raptured) at some point known only to the Lord, but we do know that it will be during the great tribulation. What could be happening on earth to bring about a situation that if God did not step in, no one would survive? What will precipitate Christ's coming?

²⁵“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶People will faint from terror, **apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.** ²⁷**At that time** they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:25-28).

As we have read before from the book of Revelation and Matthew and Mark's gospels, Luke also confirms it. The Lord Jesus comes for His people after the cosmic signs in the sun, moon and stars. The heavenly bodies themselves will be *shaken* (Verse 26). The

Greek word that is translated *shaken* is *saleuō*, it means to “waver, agitate, rock, topple and to shake.”¹ When a man looks to the heavens from earth it will look as if the planetary systems themselves will be shaking, and stars falling from the sky. It seems that the earth’s axis will be damaged and the earth will be tilting and moving on its axis for a time. Isaiah the prophet says the same thing:

¹⁹The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken.

²⁰The earth *reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind* (Isaiah 24:19-20).

No wonder that people will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the earth (Verse 26). When the world is at its darkest hour, the Lord Jesus will come. “***At that time*** they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27).

What Does the Bible Say About Armageddon?

When I say the word “Armageddon,” what do you think of? Most of us picture the final battle of the Last Days. When Christ returns, where will His feet stand? I don’t read anywhere in the scriptures of Jesus returning to Armageddon, and the reference to this place in scripture speaks of it as a place of gathering. Let’s read the Bible’s only reference to Armageddon in its context, and explore what it says:

¹²The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. ¹³Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, *to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.* ¹⁵“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” ¹⁶***Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.*** ¹⁷The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” ¹⁸Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. ¹⁹The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed (Revelation 16:12-19 Emphasis mine).

The word Armageddon comes from two Hebrew words, “*Har*,” which literally means a hill or mountain, with the second word being “*Megiddo*,” which is a place name of a strategic hill where the town or city of Megiddo was once located. Satan sends evil spirits to influence the leaders of the world in gathering together to attack Jerusalem. This gathering is to a strategic place in Israel, a valley area near to the city of Megiddo that

¹ E-sword.com on the word that is translated “shaken”

once regulated trade on the International Highway, the main trading route between the three continents of Africa, Europe and Asia. Below the hill of Megiddo, and stretching east to Northwest is the very fertile Jezreel valley. The western end of the Jezreel valley ends at Israel's main port of Haifa. The nations of the East that cross the river Euphrates, north of Damascus, can easily meet up with other nations disembarking from ships in the port of Haifa. Nations from the North of Israel can come through Lebanon. It would be a perfect gathering place.



Just because the nations of the world will gather at Armageddon, doesn't mean that the initial battle will be fought there. The battle between Israel and the Philistines that killed Saul and his sons are an example of this. We are told that the Philistines **gathered** all their forces at Apehek (1 Samuel 29:1), which is just off the bottom left hand corner of the map above, but then marched North East to Jezreel (1 Samuel 29:11) and fought with Israel on the slopes of Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:1). Apehek is near the present day city of Jaffa, south of Tel Aviv, but Mount Gilboa is just West of Beth Shan on the edge of the Jezreel Valley, a distance of around 50 miles. The place of assembly of one's forces is usually different from the place to be attacked. In this case, it is possible that the Jezreel Valley or Armageddon is just, as it says, a gathering place for the world's armies.

Jerusalem, the Problem City

The objective of the nations of the world is not to capture a valley but a city! Jerusalem is the city that has been a problem since its recapture by Israel in 1967. The Lord twice tells us that Jerusalem is His city (Isaiah 45:13; Lamentations 3:51). That is why the city is so strategic and has also become such a target, as the enemy will always seek to kill and

² Image obtained from: http://holylandarchive.com/section_images/MegiddoMap0305.jpg

destroy whatever God earmarks as His own. Scripture tells us that before the time of the end, Jerusalem will be a problem city:

²"I am going to make *Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling*. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. ³On that day, when *all the nations* of the earth are *gathered* against her, *I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves* (Zechariah 12:2-3).

There are a number of things in this passage of interest. First we are told that the nations around Israel will be stumped at their inability to sort out the problem of a Jewish state in their midst, and especially as to who owns Jerusalem. Is it a Palestinian or Jewish city? In 1980 Israel passed the "Jerusalem Law" proclaiming "united Jerusalem" as the Israeli capital, thereby annexing East Jerusalem. Up to the day of writing (Oct 2014) there is not one country that has its international embassy in Jerusalem. Secondly, we are told that Jerusalem will be a problem not only for the Arabic nations around her but for all nations, it will be "an immovable rock." The third thing we are told is that all nations will be *gathered* against her. Doesn't it sound like Armageddon is just the gathering place for an attack on Jerusalem itself? It could very well be that the attack is launched on Jerusalem while the bulk of the international armies are still arriving and gathering at Armageddon. If that is the case, Jesus will appear over Jerusalem when He comes and possibly later destroy the rest of the armies gathering at Armageddon. The distance between Jerusalem and Megiddo is around 75 miles. The prophet Zechariah tells us:

⁸On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them. ⁹On that day I will set out to destroy *all the nations that attack Jerusalem*. ¹⁰"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. *They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him* as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. ¹¹On that day the weeping in *Jerusalem* will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo (Zechariah 12:8-11).

Why do you think the Jewish people are weeping (v.11) at the intervention of the Lord against their enemies?

You'd think that there should be great rejoicing by the Jews as the Lord Himself steps in to shield those living in Jerusalem and fighting for them. So why does verse eleven say they are weeping? It is clear from the text that the Messiah (Christ) Himself shows up and the Jewish people recognize Him as the one that was crucified, the one who was pierced and rejected by their people. What will be their response? There will be a time of great mourning and repentance.

The traditional place of battle between God and His enemies is Armageddon, but the scriptural evidence seems to point to an appearance at Jerusalem first. Let's explore further by looking at what the prophet Zechariah tells us along these same lines:

¹A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. ²I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. ³Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. ⁴On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. ⁵You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. **Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.** ⁶On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. ⁷It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light (Zechariah 14:1-7).

His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives to the east of the city of Jerusalem. It is interesting to know that the Mount of Olives has hundreds of Jewish graves waiting for the Messiah to arrive in view of this prophecy. They believe that when He comes the dead will be raised to life; they are not anticipating that this is Jesus though. The Jewish people will get a big surprise.

There is another prophecy in Ezekiel 44:1-3, that the eastern gate of the city would be shut up until the arrival of Messiah. If you should ever visit Jerusalem you can see the Eastern Gate, also known as the Golden Gate, still sealed, with many graves that have been placed in front of it.

This prophecy in Ezekiel was partially fulfilled more in 1517 when the Turks conquered Jerusalem under the leadership of Suleiman the Magnificent. He commanded that the city's ancient walls be rebuilt, and in the midst of this rebuilding project, for some unknown reason, he ordered that the Eastern Gate be sealed up with stones. Legends abound as to why Suleiman closed the gate. The most believable one is that while the walls were being rebuilt, a rumor swept Jerusalem that the Messiah was coming. Suleiman called together some Jewish rabbis and asked them to tell him about the Messiah. They described the Messiah as a great military leader who would be sent by God from the east. He would enter the Eastern Gate and liberate the city from foreign control. Suleiman then decided to put an end to Jewish hopes by ordering the Eastern Gate sealed. He also put a Muslim cemetery in front of the Gate, believing that no Jewish holy man would defile himself by walking through a Muslim cemetery. The Gate has remained sealed since that time. The Muslim cemetery still blocks the entrance. The old walled city has eight gates, and the Eastern Gate, and it alone, is sealed, just as prophesied in Ezekiel 44. The world would call that "an amazing coincidence." It is also interesting to know that in the year 1917, General Gordon of the British Army captured the city of Jerusalem from the Turks. He came riding on a white horse. The Turkish army

thought this was the Messiah, so they laid down their arms without a shot being fired. Yes, the Messiah will come riding on a white horse, and in the midst of the darkness of that time, what a sight He will be!

¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹²His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean (Revelation 19:11-14).

How full of joy we will be when, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, we will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51). Paul tells us that the Lord will come down from heaven, with a loud command (how the enemies of our God will tremble)...and we who are still alive will be caught up together with our loved ones who have already gone to heaven. We will meet the Lord and our loved ones in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Imagine the joy of seeing Christ come and set everything right. The suffering of this world will be gone. God wants each one of us to be able to look forward to this day and welcome His coming. He has paid the price for each one of us to be delivered from judgment through His substitutionary death on the cross.

What will His Coming be like?

In the midst of the darkness and cosmic happenings of the earth moving and tilting on its axis, the darkness shall suddenly be shattered by brilliant light. **For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other (Luke 17:24).** The Lord will come for His people. With Him will be the angels and those Christians that have been together with Christ in heaven after their death, **“and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him” (1 Thessalonians 4:14).** In some way I do not understand, they will be reunited with their body, but it will be a glorious body. ⁴²So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. **The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).** In an instant, in the time it takes to bat your eyelids (1 Corinthians 15:52), those that are dead in Christ will rise from their graves and go before those that remain on earth. Then all other believers will be snatched up (raptured) to meet the Lord in the air.

¹⁹But your dead will live, LORD; their bodies will rise—let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy—your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead (Isaiah 26:19).

In the parable of the Ten Virgins waiting for the bridegroom, we are told that the call that the time had come was at the darkest point, at midnight (Matthew 25:6). Both the wise and the unwise all heard the herald calling out that the bridegroom was coming. Quickly, they arose to meet him. Those that were wise and had prepared put more of their oil in

the lamps from the jars, which they had brought (verse 5). They then trimmed their lamps, and went to meet the bridegroom. Let's now think on one of the most wonderful sentences in the Word of God. We are told that, "The bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10). Yes, the Bridegroom will come. Those of you who have waited long and have remained faithful will hear the call to come to the wedding.

The first thing we see is that there was an immediate entrance to the wedding upon the coming of the bridegroom. We are not listening to fables as we think upon that moment when we hear the call. Do not entertain any fallacies of a purgatory to go through first. No, it will be instant upon His coming. Great shall be your joy if you are a believer. Your face shall light up as you behold His coming in the midst of the darkness of the earth.

Their entrance into the wedding was most intimate for it was *with Him*. What a glorious thought, that Jesus Himself, the Bridegroom, will take us by the hand and lead us into the presence of His Father and into the marriage celebration. At the coming of Christ we will be united with Him forever in a covenant of marriage. From that point on we will be forever with Him, ruling and reigning as a kingdom of priests to our God (Revelation 1:6). ²⁹And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29-30).

Although we are not told all the details, scripture does indicate that the Bride of Christ will reign with Him for eternity. He is going to confer a kingdom upon us! It is the Lord Himself that has provided the robe of righteousness for us to wear. It is His kingdom and His throne that will have no end. He is preparing His Bride, the Church, to rule and reign with Him. It is here and now that the Church is learning the art of spiritual warfare, overcoming evil with good, all in preparation for the tasks that await us following the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

In his book, *Destined For The Throne*, Paul Billheimer writes:

"From the very beginning it was God's plan and purpose that out of the riven side of His Son should come an Eternal Companion to sit by His side upon the throne of the universe, to share with Him His sovereign power and authority over His eternal kingdom. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne (Revelation 3:21).

To be given the kingdom is more than to internalize kingdom principles and ethics. That is only one phase of it. To be given a kingdom is to be invested with authority over a kingdom. That this is God's glorious purpose for the Church is authenticated and confirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3: "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?...Don't you know that we shall judge

angels?" This is a pledge of what Jesus meant when He said, "The glory that you gave me I have given them" (John 17:22).

This royalty and rulership is no hollow, empty, figurative, symbolic, or emblematic thing. It is not a figment of the imagination. The Church, the Bride, the Eternal Companion is to sit *with Him* on His throne. If His throne represents reality, then hers is no fantasy. We are joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

We may not know why it pleases the Father to give the kingdom to the little flock. We may not know why Christ chooses to share His throne and His glory with the redeemed. We only know that He has chosen to do so and that it gives Him pleasure.

Therefore, from all eternity, all that precedes the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is preliminary and preparatory. Only thereafter will God's program for the eternal ages begin to unfold. God will not be ready, so to speak, to enter upon His ultimate and supreme enterprise for the ages until the Bride is on the throne with her divine Lover and Lord. Up until then, the entire universe under the Son's regulation and control is being manipulated by God for one purpose—to *prepare and train the Bride*. Truly, God is the Lord of history."³

We will be married to the Lord:

As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you (Isaiah 62:5).

What does the picture of marriage show us about God's relationship with His people? Do you see symbols in marriage that have spiritual significance relating to Christ and His Church?

The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

³There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴**they will see His face**, and His name will be on their foreheads (Revelation 22:3-4).

What glorious robes we will be wearing on that day! We will be changed into His image and show forth His glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). Can there be anything more glorious than to look into His wonderful face as He pronounces His everlasting love to us?

⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has

³ Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 1975, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Page 26.

come, and **his bride has made herself ready.** ⁸Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.) (Revelation 19:7-8).

We shall be with Him forever. No one shall speak a word against us on that day and there will be no one to accuse us before the Father because all sin has been forgiven and is under His blood. Divine justice has been fully met at the cross with Christ’s substitutionary death for us. They that were ready went *with Him* into the wedding banquet. I want to point out how joyous will be the entrance. This will not be an entrance to be witnesses to His marriage; this is to be married *to Him*. This is not a wedding on earth; this is a wedding *in heaven*. This will be many times more glorious than any wedding you have ever seen, and I remind you again, if you have entrusted your life to Christ, you are the bride! You will one day hear Him speak His eternal vows of marriage over you! At the moment, on this side of heaven, we are only promised in marriage, but when the Bridegroom comes, then will be the wedding. Next time you go to a wedding on earth, you can view it as a foreshadowing of that day when He comes for you to lead you up the aisle. They that were ready went in with Him into the wedding banquet. How blessed a time it will be to have no evil, no temptation. There will be no more tears, for it is said of the Son of God, **“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”** (Revelation 21:4).

There is one more thought that I cannot pass by. It is that the door is shut behind us (Matthew 25:10). This shows that our experience of this new order of things is eternal. That which God has been doing in your life has been but a preparation for that day, but when that day comes it will be eternal, and wonderful to know that we are shut in with Christ (Matthew 25:10). None are naturally ready for the joys of heaven; no man or woman can ever be good enough. There must be a bestowing, a divine transfusion, of the life of God into your spirit. Each one has to undergo a change within. Jesus said, “You must be born again,” or born from above (John 3:3). The Greek word translated *again* in that sentence, also means *“from above.”* When we truly repent (turn around from our sin toward obedience to the Lord Jesus) and receive the gift of God, which is eternal life in Christ, from that point on our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 21:27). As much as it is painful for those outside, it is pure joy for those of us, which by God’s grace alone, are inside the door at the wedding.

To finish, it would be beautiful to click on the link below and worship to the song, We Will Dance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCTTrD3SzEw>

Prayer: Father, I thank you for your faithfulness and the strength that you provide. I ask that you teach us to listen so that we can walk with you day by day. As we look forward to your coming, we lift up our heads and say together, “Come Lord Jesus!”

Keith Thomas
keiththomas7@gmail.com

Website for additional studies: www.groupbiblestudy.com