

2. There are two other New Testament terms used of the second coming of Jesus. *Apokalypsis* — which means 'uncovering', 'laying bare' or 'revealing'. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7,13. What do you learn from these verses concerning what will be 'revealed' about mankind and about Christ at his coming?

Traditionally 'Epiphany' is the time in the church calendar celebrating the showing of the baby Jesus to the Magi or wise men. The Greek word, *epiphaneia*, means 'manifestation' or 'appearing'. It also has the idea of opening a curtain in order to see what is there hidden behind it. Look at 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13. What can you gather from these verses will be made clear, or manifest, when Jesus appears again?

### Notes



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### Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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### Week 36: Christ's second coming (A topic study)

The nuclear age' — a time when all the news seems full of gloom and doom, and uncertainty about who might accidentally push a button and end the world. But knowing that God is in control of history, and that Christ will come again, fills the believer with joy, confidence and hope — not despair!

#### Day 1. The king is coming

##### **1 Corinthians 15:12-28, 35-49, 50-58**

The Greek term most often used in the New Testament for the second coming of Christ is *parousia*. This means 'arrival', 'coming' or 'presence', and was often used in other Greek literature to describe the arrival of a king or visiting dignitary.

Just as a king's coming is announced and eagerly expected beforehand, so we are not surprised that the Bible is full of references to Christ's second coming, as King of kings. In fact there are over 250 references in the New Testament alone! But we shall look at only a few!

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-28. The word *parousia* appears in verse 23. What changes will Christ bring about at his second coming?

**Note:** The NIV translates this as a verb, 'when he comes', in verse 23.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49. Paul is answering questions (verse 35) which some Corinthians may have raised about what their future resurrection bodies would be like. Make a list of the differences Paul shows between our earthly bodies (now) and resurrection bodies (then).

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. These are glorious, hopeful verses for the Christian. Read them out loud and take a few minutes to use them as a basis for thanking God that you too, one day, will 'be changed'.

#### Day 2. Why come a second time?

##### **Matthew 16:26-27; Romans 2:5-11**

History has sometimes been described as 'His (God's) story'. Christ, by his life, death and resurrection, has undoubtedly affected human history more than any other person. And the climax of all history will be when he comes the second time.

It is then that the great divide will be fully made between those who belong to Christ and those who do not.

Throughout this study make a note of the various points made in each passage.

1. Jesus will come as Judge. Read Matthew 16:26-27; Romans 2:5-11. From these passages, on what basis will God judge? How will he decide who to welcome and who to turn away? How will anyone escape such judgment? - Look at Acts 2:17-21.
2. Those already dead will be resurrected. Turn to John 5:28-29. But what happens in the meantime to those Christians who die before Jesus comes again? See 2 Corinthians 5:6-10; Philippians 1:23. Notice that the Bible does not teach an 'in-between' time of purgatory or limbo.

God's judgment is a sobering thought. Turn some of these Scriptures into prayer:

- Confess anything in your life worthy of God's judgment.
- Praise God that his justice goes hand in hand with his love.
- Thank him for sparing you because of what Jesus has done.
- Pray for a friend who is not yet a Christian, that he or she may believe and experience God's mercy.

### **Day 3. The Christian hope**

#### **Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 6:9-17**

God has promised us that Jesus will return again. Not only will he come as Judge and wind up history as we know it, but there are several other reasons for his coming:

1. To gather the Church and deliver his people. What can you glean of this from Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 6:9-17; I Thessalonians 4:16-17?
2. To complete God's purposes for the Christian. We shall be like Christ and be with him forever! What insights of this can you gain from John's glimpse into heaven in Revelation 20:1-6,11; 21:1-8?
3. Read Romans 8:18-25. What difference will Christ's second coming make to the whole of creation and to you as a Christian?

Write out Romans 8:18 on a slip of paper. Take it with you today, read it often and learn it by heart.

### **Day 4. Signs of the time**

#### **Matthew 25:1-30; Mark 13:32-37**

The Bible does not tell us exactly when Christ is coming again. In fact, trying to predict a date when the world as we know it will end can lead into serious error.

1. One of the things marking out cults or sects from Christian truth is their over-emphasis on one point of belief at the expense of others. This is true, for example, of some, where their preoccupation with detailed predictions of future events (including several wrongly predicted dates for the end of the world!) has distorted what the Bible is really saying. Try to work out how you would use this study to answer such predictions.
2. Read Matthew 25:1-13,14-30; Mark 13:32-17.

In these three passages Jesus used concrete illustrations to show what things will be like when he comes again. Notice that each one is not concerned to give a detailed timetable of events, but a challenge to live in the light of his coming.

3. How far does Jesus emphasize this challenge?
4. For each of these illustrations or parables write down a title which expresses in your own words the main challenge for you to put into practice.
5. What do you learn from each story about the timing of Jesus' coming?

Pray about your response to the challenge in today's readings.

### **Day 5. The last days**

#### **2 Peter 3:3-13; 2 Timothy 3:1-5**

1. We are certainly nearly 2000 years nearer to the return of Christ than was the early church. But how should that affect the way that we live now?
2. As you read 2 Timothy 3:1-5, assess how far these are true of our times today. Are any of these things true of your life? If so, take some minutes to come to God in repentance and ask his forgiveness.
3. 2 Peter 3:3-13. What are the main points which Peter describes here about the last times and Christ's second coming?

**Note:** The early disciples believed they were living in the 'last days'. In fact, this refers to the whole period between the ascension of Christ and the *parousia* (his literal return, or second coming).

4. Taking up Peter's question in verse 11, what sort of a person ought you to be in response to this teaching? Is there anything you would change in your life if you knew Christ was coming tomorrow?

### **Weekend**

1. The 'Day of the Lord' is an important theme in the Old Testament, referring to a future day of God's judgment. You may like to do your own word study on these verses. What do they tell you about the character of God? Isaiah 10:3; Joel 2:30-31; Malachi 3:2; Matthew 7:22; 1 Corinthians 3:13; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 6:17.