**The Last Days according to Jesus**

**Part 3**

**“Christ’s Second Coming to Earth”**

**Matt 24:29-31 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”**

**This is my third message on the Last Days according to Jesus, and today I want to talk about the Rapture and 2nd coming—mainly the 2nd coming.**

**The most significant event in Bible prophecy is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—the literal return of Christ to the earth.**

**Over 300 separate prophecies predict it in Scripture, which makes it one of the most important doctrines in the Bible.**

**In fact, for every prophecy on the FIRST coming of Christ as a baby, there are eight concerning his SECOND coming.**

**I don’t believe a Christian can have a truly well-rounded faith who does not understand the truth about the Second Coming of Christ.**

**The truth is that All the roads of history and prophecy will converge at the return of Christ.**

**One author writes, “Jesus’ second coming is the climax of our creeds and the final proof of the sovereignty of God over human history.”**

**His return will bring an end to this age and usher in a brand new world.**

**And His return will bring the final stage of our redemption, and of all that God has promised to those who love his Son!**

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**Now, in our day there is an ongoing debate over how the Rapture spoken of I Thessalonians 4:13-18 relates to the Second Coming.**

**Some see them as the same event.**

**Others see them as separated by three-and-a-half years or seven years.**

**If you believe the rapture will happen before the 7 year tribulation period, you’re called a “pre-tribber.”**

**If you believe it happens at the end of the 7 year tribulation period, you’re a “post-tribber.”**

**And many Christians are like the man who said he is a “pan-tribber,”—he believes it’s all going to “pan out” in the end!**

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**Without spending too much time on this, I’ll just leave it that this is an area where Christians can sincerely disagree and still be saved!**

**—I personally believe that Christ’s return will occur in two stages, primarily because of the many differences laid out in Scripture between the 2 events.**

**This means I believe that Christ will come before the Tribulation to resurrect dead Christians from the grave, and to “rapture” or lift off the earth all living believers.**

**Those Christians who are raised or raptured will be taken to heaven (the “Father’s house” of John 14:1-3,) where their works (not sins) will be judged according to 2 Corinthians 5:10.**

**This “Judgment Seat of Christ” will be followed by the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” spoken of in Revelation 19:7-10.**

**While this is going on in heaven, the horrors of the seven-year Tribulation will be unfolding on earth.**

**At the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return to destroy the Antichrist, stop the Great War of Armageddon, and set up His kingdom.**

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**Now, let me highlight the differences I see between the Rapture and the 2nd coming of Christ to explain why I believe they are 2 events:**

**—In the Rapture, Christ comes *FOR* his saints; at the 2nd coming, he comes *WITH* his saints.**

**The book of Jude quotes a prophecy from Enoch regarding the 2nd coming which says, “Behold, the Lord comes *WITH* ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all...” (vs.14-15)**

**—Second, the Rapture takes place in the air, the 2nd coming takes place on the earth.**

**Zechariah the Prophet wrote of Jesus’s 2nd coming, “On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem” (14:4).**

**—In the Rapture believers go from earth to heaven, at the Glorious Appearing they go from heaven to earth.**

**—At the Rapture Jesus comes to REWARD his people, at the 2nd coming He comes to JUDGE the earth.**

**—At the Rapture he CLAIMS his bride; at the Glorious Appearing he comes WITH his bride.**

**—The Rapture signals the BEGINNING of the “Wrath of the Lamb,” while the 2nd coming COMPLETES the “Wrath of the Lamb.”**

**—There are no signs predicting the Rapture, while there are many signs predicting the 2nd coming.**

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**Now, I readily admit there’s no verse that says, “Christ will come before the Tribulation.”**

**I take my stand based on what I see as the clear, distinct differences between the two.**

***So...My resolve is to live like He could return today!***

***If I’m wrong, I will have lived a God honoring Christian life when I’m done!***

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**But what we can ALL agree on is that Christians have always believed in the Second Coming of Christ—we all have that in common!**

**Jesus promised, “I will come back” (John 14:3).**

**Three times in Revelation 22 (the last chapter of the Bible) Jesus Himself says, “I am coming soon!”**

**The last prayer recorded in the Bible is a prayer for the Second Coming: “Even so, Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).**

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**So let’s lay out today what it means when the Bible says Christ Jesus will return.**

**When Jesus was taken back up into heaven while His amazed disciples watched, two angels appeared to them and said,**

**“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? *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).**

**Notice the phrase “*This same Jesus*.”**

**Twice in one verse Luke uses the word “same” to tell us something crucial about the Second Coming.**

**The “same” Jesus will return in the “same” way.**

**This passage and others like it remove all doubt that Jesus is coming back to earth personally, literally, visibly and bodily.**

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**It’s also worth noting that his coming will be sudden and unexpected.**

**The Book of Acts records that “...as they (the disciples) were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight”—apparently without any warning! (Acts 1:9)**

**So we can assume that His return to the earth will be likewise astonishing and surprising!**

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**Think about it!**

**The same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem is coming again.**

**The same Jesus who grew up in Nazareth,**

**turned water into wine,**

**walked on water,**

**healed the lepers,**

**raised Lazarus,**

**rode into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday,**

**was whipped, beaten, and mocked,**

**who died on the cross,**

**and who rose from the dead on the first Easter morning,**

**This *same Jesus* is coming again!**

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**Now, in our text in Matthew 24:29-31, Jesus gave 3 signs that will happen at the time of His return, and I’ll close with these:**

**First, He gave...**

**I. The Time of His Coming**

**He says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days” (Matthew 24:29a).**

**Again, this refers to the coming seven-year tribulation that immediately precedes the coming of Christ to the earth.**

**When those days have come to their terrible climax, Jesus will return to the earth.**

**Secondly,**

**II. Heavenly Signs will herald His Coming**

**Jesus said, “The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (Matthew 24:29b).**

**Jesus mentions 4 cosmic “signs” coinciding with His return:**

**—The sun will be darkened.**

**—The moon will not give its light.**

**—The stars will fall from the sky.**

**—The heavenly bodies will be shaken.**

**These are not metaphors or Jesus using exaggeration to make a point, they are literal events that will happen in the future.**

**—First, The sun will somehow be darkened and the moon will fade from sight.**

**—Second, The stars will fall from the sky and every star, planet, comet, meteor, asteroid, and every other heavenly body will be shaken out of its God-appointed place.**

**You say, “C’mon Jeff, that’s hard to believe!”**

**Well, let’s remember Colossians tells us that all things in our universe are held together by Christ!**

**Col 1:17 “...in Him all things hold together (He is the controlling, cohesive force of the universe.)”**

**Jesus is literally the “glue of the universe.”**

**If the Lord were to say the word today, gravity would cease and the universe would explode into trillions of pieces.**

**Apparently, when Christ returns the gravitational field will be altered somehow, causing the stars to veer from their courses and the planets to careen off in space.**

**It will be the most amazing event in world history.**

**No one will miss what is happening.**

**It will be terrifying, worldwide, and unmistakable.**

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**And the last great sign is—Jesus will appear!**

**“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).**

**This verse describes the literal return of Christ to the earth!**

**Unlike the Rapture, which happens in the “twinkling of an eye,” the armies of the world battling in the valley of Armageddon will actually see Christ in the sky as he makes his way from heaven to earth, surrounded by the saints, the angels, and the clouds of God’s glory.**

**Jesus said, “all the nations of the earth,” will see Him.**

**And they will mourn when they see Christ returning because...**

**—they know he is coming in judgment,**

**—they know they are not ready.**

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**Church, the first time Jesus came unnoticed as a baby; the second time “every eye will see him.”**

**In his first coming Jesus was the humble babe born in a manger.**

**When he returns, he will come back as conquering King of Kings and Lord of Lords.**

**He came the first time as the Lamb of God; he comes again as the Lion of Judah.**

**In His first coming His enemies refused to acknowledge Him.**

**In the 2nd coming “Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).**

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**Are you ready to meet Him? LET’S PRAY**