

He'll Be Back

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read two brief passages. Our theme tonight is the last in the series of the flesh and blood series of flesh and blood Jesus. And as he's coming back. So I want to read two passages.

The first is from one Thessalonians four and versus 13 to 17. One Thessalonians four versus 13 to 17. But we do not want you to be uninformed brothers about those who are asleep that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word from the Lord that we who are left are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command with the voice of an archangel and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

[1 : 21] And also a short reading from Revelation chapter 21. And versus one to five which speaks about the new heavens and the new earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with him and they will be his God and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

And he who was seated on the throne said, behold, I am making all things new. Also, he said, write down these things for these words are trustworthy and true.

[2 : 35] So I just want to for a few minutes talk about that theme of he is coming back. And I think that's an appropriate and I hope encouraging theme for us in the loss we face as a congregation over this last week with Elizabeth's passing, and but also enables us to think about the hope that we have to share.

And we chose this whole theme of a flesh and blood Jesus because we asked the question, why does it matter to have both to think about that theme and also why does it matter that we have a flesh and blood savior.

And I think it's because I mean there's lots of reasons and I hope that, you know, and we've focused on some of them over this last few weeks. But partly it's because we need to relate to him and also to worship him. So we need a savior.

We need God, a God who we can relate to, and also who we can worship. And we can do that in the person of Jesus. Also, because if he was as we've seen to be our savior, if he was going to be the savior of humanity or people like you and me, he needed to become like you and me he needed to be human.

And yet also, he needed to be God in order to be powerful and strong and just enough to save us. And all the mystery of that. There's a cosmic battle against evil that we needed God to deal with.

[4 : 23] There was a one to one relational fracture between me and God, that only a fellow being of flesh and blood could put right, because only he as a representative could take the rap and could

die my death and experience the sting of my death, the sting of death I should face, would take God's guilt, my guilt, and meet God's justice. So there's, we've seen lots of different reasons why it's important that we have a flesh and blood savior.

And we're going to think for a few minutes of the fact that it's a flesh and blood savior that's going to come back. Jesus is coming back in verse 16 of one Thessalonians four it says for the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel with the trumpet call of God.

And that whole concept of Jesus flesh and blood Jesus coming back. And the idea of someone significant someone important someone that we love coming back. It kind of touches us at the core of our flesh and blood humanity you know, and there's always there's something about reunion. There's something about absence that is ended by reunion of people that you love. There's something about someone important or someone that we love coming back that speaks into our longings of fulfillment.

And it's a very human experience. It relates to our dreams and to our hopes and the reunion the physical reality of reunions with people, you know, and maybe, maybe more so just now because of what we've experienced physically in our separations.

[6 : 29] And I'm looking at the restrictions maybe these longings for reunion these longings for being together these longings for personal physical interaction again with one another has really become very pertinent and very significant for us.

And I'm looking at the restrictions of what we're looking forward to I'm really looking forward to seeing people not on a screen, but face to face.

And we're looking forward to the first Sunday that we can all be together without masks and sing our hearts. I tell you what if we don't raise the roof on that Sunday and blast the whole place with singing then I'll be hugely disappointed, because there's something great about in lots of family reunions or reunions because of the restrictions are really important really really touches at the very core of our being as human be as people.

But I think the very, and even the best you the the reunions we look forward to most in this world, whatever they be, whether it's a Christmas time or parties or just work is separated us from one another.

And the best reunions are only a shadow at the very best a shadow pointing to the spiritual reality that we will, we will find fulfilled in our reunion with Jesus.

[7 : 59] And what I want to stress tonight in a sense is that that will also be a physical reunion, because it's a flesh and blood savior we have and that's very important and I want to spend about time thinking about that.

The second coming of Jesus I think is is a very important theological truth and it's, I don't think and I hold up my hands and confession here I don't think it's something I think enough about and it's certainly something I haven't preached enough about over the years.

And it's very important for us to do so to, you know, when you think of what you're looking forward to in life what you're excited about. There may be lots of lots of things that you're excited about in life, lots of things you're looking forward to lots of things you're anticipating.

Well as Christians I think this should be at the very core of our excitement and of our anticipation in life. There's because there's going to, there's never going to be a day like it for the Christian.

It's the most. I don't know if you can rate days in eternity you can't do that can you because you're not in time and I'm not sure if you can, you can have number one and two greatest experiences but if you could surely this day is going to be the best day ever for the Christian.

[9 : 26] And it's a guaranteed day for us it's something that we can anticipate and look forward to not just with a vague wishful thinking but recognizing that this day will happen for us and we should be and excited about and we should be anticipating it as Christians on a on a day to day basis.

There's lots of different references to the second coming in the New Testament I'm just going to quickly go through one or two of them. I'm not going to look them up but just mention what their emphasis in Acts chapter one the disciples Jesus talks about, or the angel sorry the angel talks about Jesus and the ascension and saying you know, why are you looking up into the heavens like that he will return the same way as he has gone. So there's this reality of the physical ascension of Jesus is going to somehow mirror the physical return of Jesus there's going to be something that he ascended to heaven he's going to descend back, and it will be not just for the disciples to see but

miraculously somehow for every eye to see Hebrews 828 says that when he comes back he's not coming this time to deal with sin as he did in the cross you will not come as a humility, a savior and humiliation but he'll come in and bring him home those who are waiting for his return. Matthew 24 Jesus speaks about his return being unexpected. Matthew 25 says it'll be universal every eye will see.

Also quite scarily says that it will be a time of separation so there'll be a time of judgment final judgment and separation between the sheep of the goats. Luke 21 says he will come with great power and with power and great glory.

John 5 says that we will be raised and our bodies will be raised to the resurrection of life. And Revelation 616 says it will be also an awesomely scary day, the wrath of the Lamb, judgment day and that people will call in the hills and the mountains to cover them because of that.

Isaiah 65 and also Peter, for a second Peter 3 speaks, and also Revelation where we read speaks about his coming as ushering in the renewal of the heavens, new heavens and the new earth, a physical universe which will be matched and will be inhabited by physically resurrected people and a physical flesh and blood and a savior. So we find that actually everything in the Old Testament, which is pointing primarily as we see it to Christ's first coming.

[12 : 21] If you gather all that up with the New Testament, you find that both of them ultimately put anticipate his second coming, the New Testament much more so.

It will be the end of linear history. History is not cyclical. History is linear. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. And the end of the history that we are in at the moment is the second coming of Jesus.

It is not an ultimate end in our death now is not an ultimate end. And this and even the physical universe we know is not all there is because Jesus is coming back to usher in something completely different.

So the physical return of Jesus has two aspects to it, I think. It's the physical return of Christ and his resurrected body. Again, verse 16, the Lord himself will come down and it's there's an intensification of that pronoun I'll mention again in Revelation, it's the Lord himself who will come down. So the ascended but the physically real Jesus who will always have a body will return.

And there will be no need anymore for faith in Jesus Christ because we will see him. Faith is a temporary experience for us. And that makes it quite tough because we were relationship for us is always meant to be physical.

[14 : 01] It's always meant to be flesh and blood. It's always meant to be with other people. We're not really built for relationship by faith.

Not seeing and not touching and not being present with others. And that's why I think in a sense zoom and online stuff has been quite difficult for us because being great in many ways been great. We're going to see each other.

It's a shadow of what we're meant to experience. Presence is very important for humanity. And Jesus return will be the end of faith at that level because we will see we will be present with him physically.

And that will be amazing. And what a sight that will be that reunion, the reunion that we have with Jesus by faith will be satisfied because we will see him physically.

I watched a program recently about Auschwitz about the the liberation of Auschwitz. I've got an interest in that whole period and having visited it a few years ago in the horror of that place.

[15 : 17] I always imagined that for the few poor skeletal bodies that remained, what an absolute joy. What a joy. It must have been for them to see their liberators to see people coming in who weren't going to beat them up or shoot them or throw them to a grass What an absolute, you can't imagine the experience, what joy they would have felt at their liberators coming. And even the reunion, there wasn't many reunions for these poor people because so many of them lost all their families, everyone they knew.

But can you imagine the reunions that there were, having maybe thought they would never see their loved ones again, even though there were few and far between these reunions.

And you know what it's like, don't you, when you when you love someone and they've been gone and they come back and you see them again if you're part of them, the reunions are great. And that gives you a flavor, just a very tiny speck of a flavor of what it will be to see the miraculous return of Jesus for us as Christians.

He will be glorious. Every eye will see him, it will be glorious, but it will be a resurrected physical Jesus, we will see it will be the same Jesus who walked with his disciples on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection.

And that's the same Jesus that appeared to the disciples in the upper room in that locked room, the same Jesus who was cooking fish on the beach for his disciples who were fishing.

[16:57] And that, that will be our experience of meeting with a resurrected savior Jesus. It's going to be amazing. I'm just going on the assumption here that, which is not really a fair assumption, one of the assumptions that will all be alive when he comes back.

That might not of course be the case. We might have died and gone to heaven in our soul, but just, just go with me for a minute and we'll just say we're all going to be alive when Jesus comes back. But when we see him, it's not really going to be alone. Because he's going to take with him all our old and new friends and family in Christ. The dead who are in Christ will rise first and they will meet with Christ in that cataclysmic event, a cataclysmic time.

A hugely emotional celebratory beyond our wildest dreams. He'll come with just a multitude that no one can number and we will be added to that.

We will rise from the grave. If we're not, we will just go to be with him. Unimaginably great.

Unimaginably just altogether unbelievable.

[18:21] And he will be at the center of that. And as he returns, he will know us all and he will be welcoming us. And he'll be saying, he'll be saying, I told you, I told you so.

I said I would come back for you. Now come with me and enjoy eternity. That's what we'll be like. It'll be a physical, verbal, international return of Jesus Christ.

He will come with a resurrection, resurrected body. And he will also take us to a recreated home. Revelation 21 speaks about there's different places that speak about that we mentioned the new heavens and the new earth.

And that's really the two greatest things, isn't it? Reunion with a person. And also sometimes going home. The two things are very closely linked, aren't they?

Home will often be linked with people, but it'll also be a place, something that's important. And you know that one of the great things about home is the security and comfort it brings to us and the significance of that.

[19:29] And we know in this world that sometimes that's not the case. I mentioned that in my prayer. That sometimes home for people that should be the most beautiful and secure place.

And sometimes it can be a place of abuse and horror. And that's a dreadful thing. But when it's a beautiful place for us, that also is very powerful analogy for us about Christ's return because he's bringing us our promised inheritance.

So in many ways, salvation, this is maybe a bit of a, probably a bit of an unorthodox thing to say, but it's always been about the land.

Salvation has always been about the land, as well as the person. So, you know, the land of Canaan as it spoke of the land flowing with milk and honey, God giving them a place.

And it is culminated in the new heavens and the new earth. It's about a homeland, a place that we call home, a special destination.

[20:41] And you know, in this world, even this world, that's always important too, isn't it? Your first home, a memorable holiday destination, a land that you own, something that you call your own, that has great images and great importance for you.

It's a strong, it's a strong image for the heart of human beings. It's the places that have given us our deepest happiness, sometimes the cause of our deepest hurt in this terrible world that we live in.

And we see that so often war or abuse or dispossession, homelessness revolves around land or the home, the place that should have the most love and security.

And that will end in the new heavens and the new earth. And the land and the company we keep is fused together in Christ's second coming home.

He says it's where the heart is and that's very true, isn't it, Thoris? So Christ in his return will be walking with us physically, taking us into our new home.

[21:55] He's going to show us round, he's going to show us round our new home. He's going to point out different things about this lovely new heavens and new earth and we will walk with him and he will guide us and show us all the things that we can do and explore.

And it's interesting, Revelation 21 as well, it says, it uses the same phrase as for Specialonians 4.

You can just look it up again and hear it with you. Revelation 21 where we read and it's in verse, the middle of verse 3, it says, and I heard a loud voice from the heaven thrown saying, look, God's dwelling places now among his people, he will dwell with them.

They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. And God here being spoken of that he himself will be with him and of course in Thessalonians it's the Lord himself will be with him and it's that intensive pronoun that we've given here.

The Lord, he himself will be there and the physicality of Jesus is being, we've been reminded of it and been assured of it here, it's confirming, it's comforting.

[23 : 16] God is saying for us in the future there's going to be a day and I'm going to be there with you. And I'll be there with you in the person of Jesus Christ and I'll be there with you in the person of the Father and the Spirit, a Godness.

There will be an atmosphere, an incompatible atmosphere to enjoy on that day so it's a returning physically of Jesus and of a recreate, a renewed cosmos that will be home.

And some of the things that are really lovely now, music, scenery, love, laughter, relationship, beauty, warmth, all the very best things that we think about and long for, it will be multiplied infinitely without end in the new heavens and the new earth with Jesus.

So there's no let down, no disappointment as Revelation 21 reminds us the cause of our tears, you know, think of all the things that cause you to cry, cause tears now, all of that will be gone, sad tears.

The old order is passed away, the insecurities, the doubts, the anxiety, the fear, the shadows, the aging, the partings, the separation, the closed doors, the confined spaces, the disappointments, the frustrations, the ugliness, the violence, the destruction, the hatred, the pain, the weakness of older age, the selfishness, the sin, the violence, the abuse, all of it, all of it will be gone. That's what he's saying in Revelation 21, all things will be made new.

[25 : 03] And so we remind ourselves tonight of that great truth of Christ's second coming, that it is glorious as he returns for all eyes to see his resurrected body and he ushers us into his new home and that's the message that fills us, should fill us with anticipation and hope and joy.

And our response, I'm just going to briefly speak about our response in closing and also mentioned there that it, that as we said before, it's a day of, it can also, it will also be a day of dread.

So our response and there's four very quick responses that I'm going to mention. I'll give you the references, you can look them up yourself at some point if you want.

The first is, we should be eager. Romans 8 speaks about longing with an eager expectation. The creation longs, groans, and so should we, with eager expectation to be liberated from this body of death and from this world in which we live.

And so there should be a longing and anticipation. It should be something we think about. It should be something we dream about. You know, we should try and pray that God will help us dream about it more.

[26 : 22] Thinking about Christ and what he's promised. The fulfillment of what we were created to enjoy. And then nothing else in this world can satisfy what we're going to have in that world to come at the fulfillment of all that we were made to be.

And don't go looking for fulfillment and happiness and fulfill the expectation ultimately in anything else. Be eager, have a longing. It's right that we're groaning, you know, sometimes right there were groaning in this aching aging broken world because we're longing for something better.

Be eager, be patient. James five or seven speaks about being patient as we wait for the Lord's return. And we were sowing the seed. We're waiting for the harvest. And again, for us, it often feels very tough. It feels like within a, let it feel like a Narnia within a permanent winter.

But we're not alone. Remember that. And he gives us a spirit and he's coming back to usher in a completely different world of blessing and harvest for us.

Be eager and be patient. But also be ready. Matthew 24 speaks about that we need to be watchful. And as Christians, that means we need to be alert and living as as Christians and living for him and living for his glory and living for the kingdom coming and doing his will, living with that wisdom and that perspective and and having our trust in him and maybe that.

[28 : 06] That's something we need to challenge those who aren't Christians about. I know it's difficult. I know people don't believe in in the afterlife, but we somehow need to find common ground with them so that they will begin to see that it is perfectly proper to consider these things that there is something more than this life that there is a there is a day of judgment. We will be held

accountable all our, all our longings for justice.

In this world point to a greater day. But remember it's a day of dreads a day of wrath as well that horrible. Sorry, that's not the right word that frightening picture of the wrath of the lamb, you know that mixed metaphor.

And we can only stand on that day if we are safe in Jesus because there will be an ultimate judgment and as Jesus says in Matthew 24 will be a separation.

And that is absolutely final. And it is one that should cause us to pause and to think and especially to pray and evangelize and share our faith. So be eager, be patient, be ready.

And lastly, be encouraged. You know that the verse in the passage with Ed and Thessalonians. It starts with brothers and sisters we do not want you to be uninformed that those who sleep and death.

[29 : 37] So that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind so we don't grieve as those who have no hope. And then verse 18, therefore encourage one another with these words mentioned that as a best Thanksgiving service on Thursday that this is important.

This is important because we don't grieve as those with with no without hope. We are to encourage one another with these things. So it's not just a personal private truth that we're to meditate on and dream about and be eager about and think about ourselves.

And this is I think somewhere where we can really work harder at doing which is encourage each other in spiritual truths. And encourage each other in the hope of the gospel and in the second coming of Jesus speak to each other often about it, dream about it with one another and what will be like and and what Jesus says about it and how, how it's going to happen then.

And just remember to be encouraged as Paul was encouraging that early church in Thessalonica with all its battles and troubles, troubles with this hope of the second coming that we would, we would do the same.

It's been a tough year for us in lots of different ways. And whatever happens, we know it's incompatible with what lies ahead for us, absolutely.

[31 : 11] And actually, in our experience for the future that we can know that Jesus will be back is coming back for us, whether that is before or after we die, he will be back and we will rise flesh and blood rise to be with him the flesh and blood savior.

And that's exactly the kind of savior that we need. One who's coming back for us and one who's going to give us a new home. So do encourage one another with these words. I hope that this has been a helpful series.

It's a great thing. And it's a great savior we have in this. We can look at him in a million different ways and still learn more about him.

Maybe you're encouraged and that we are built up by the fact that he's coming back.