

# UPON THE ROCK

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Upon the Rock is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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## JESUS IS COMING

Phil Gear

Forty days following His resurrection Jesus met with His disciples on Mt Olivet, outside Jerusalem. As He talked with them, He suddenly disappeared in the clouds “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11). His days on earth in physical form were over. He had ascended back to His Father in heaven. But, not wanting, the disciples were not to be disheartened; the angels assured them that Jesus was coming back exactly as he had left – in the clouds.

This should not have been new information for his disciples. He had personally told them the same thing just a few weeks before, but they had not seemed to grasp his meaning. The night before he was crucified he had told them, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Fathers house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3). When he had accomplished his work on earth he returned to his Father to “appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24). He is working as “an advocate with the Father...the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2). At the appropriate time appointed by the Father he will return. (Acts 17:31).

Perhaps no religious subject has generated the discussion and debate as has that of the Jesus’ return. Opinions range from the idea that his return is only a figurative concept, not to be taken literally to fanciful speculations of the “end times”. Some would have us believe that the Bible predicts these “end times” in such great detail as to even instruct us as to what signs to look for. Television evangelists, authors, preachers, “scholars” and many others use this subject to raise money, sell books, and unfortunately mislead people.

- Romans 6:16: “Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey;” When we allow our bodies to be addicted to nicotine or to any other drug, are we not becoming servants to the drug?
- I Corinthians 6:12: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Many people have allowed their bodies and minds to be brought under the power of tobacco.
- I Corinthians 6:19-20: “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God’s.” When we become Christians, our bodies and our spirits become the property of God. We can not longer use our bodies for any pleasure we may desire. Our bodies become the temple of God’s Holy Spirit. If we engage in habits of the flesh which are harmful to the body, are we glorifying God in our bodies?
- I Peter 2:11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts (desires) which war against the soul;” Christians must be spiritually minded—not carnally minded. These fleshly desires are not always sexual desires. Every fleshly desire which wars against our soul must be avoided.

Yes, God made the tobacco plant and it is good. Tests and studies have proven it is good for insecticides, fertilizers, and disinfectants. There may be other good uses that have not yet been discovered. However, tests, studies and observations have proven that the use of tobacco in the body can be very harmful. Therefore, we admonish all Christians to be very careful to abstain from its use.

Albert E. Farley from the *West Virginia Christian*, Volume 6, Number 8, p.2).

The Bible definitely teaches the return of Christ, but says nothing of much of the theory and conjecture that many find appealing. It says nothing of the date of his return, but only assures us of its fact. Sadly, the repeatedly incorrect speculation on dates has caused some to become skeptical of the whole idea. Some have even ridiculed it. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:3-10). Scoffers may choose to sneer at the return of Jesus, but one who believes the Bible knows it will happen.

It is of utmost importance that we prepare for that day. For the prepared it will be a day of joy and excitement. We will finally see our Savior face to face. We will actually hear his voice, and see the realization of those wonderful promises that he gives us. Hope will become reality. We can approach that day with great confidence and faith. “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). The apostle Paul actually talked of “loving” the appearance of Christ. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). That day will mean the end of suffering and trouble. It will mark the beginning of an eternity of joy and happiness in the eternal presence of God.

However, for the unprepared it will be a day of great fear and horror. It will mark the end of all opportunity to get right with God. At that point nothing remains “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:27). It will be a terrifying experience with only one possible outcome—eternity in hell forever separated from the presence of God. Some stress that God is a loving God, and would never condemn anyone to hell,” but the Bible teaches the exact opposite. Yes, He is a God of love who does not wish that any should perish, but at the same time he is a “consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Romans 11:22).

Considering the only two choices available, why would anyone not make the necessary preparations for that great day? IT IS COMING! That is as certain as anything can be. Jesus is returning! We know that because God himself told us so. Our confidence and faith in the return of Jesus is not based on wishful thinking, dreams, or unsubstantiated opinions. It is based on the unchangeable, completely reliable word of God.

The writers of the articles in this issue of *Upon The Rock* will encourage each of us to give serious consideration to this solemn topic. They will be looking at various aspects of the return of Jesus from the standpoint of what the Bible says. They, undoubtedly, will disagree with much of what is taught by popular preachers and televangelists, but that does not matter. What matters is what the Bible says. Please give your earnest attention to this vitally important material. Your soul's eternal destiny is at stake. DO not reject what is said simply because it is different from what you have always heard and believed. Search the Scriptures for yourself to see if it is what is taught. May God bless us all as we consider the return of Jesus.

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## THE CHRISTIAN AND TOBACCO

Albert E. Farley

God created the tobacco plant on the third day, and God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:11-12). As far as we can determine, the tobacco plant is not mentioned specifically in the Bible. It is in the nightshade family *Solanaceae*. The kind most used today is the *genus* *Nicotina* and the species *N. Tabacum*.

Historically, Columbus discovered people smoking tobacco in pipes when he came to the New World in 1492. He took tobacco seeds back to Spain, and it eventually began to be grown throughout Europe. The people of Europe first began using tobacco as a medicine to help them relax. It came back to America in 1612 and became an important crop in the southern colonies. For the last three hundred years Americans have been using it in pipes, cigars, and cigarettes, and in chewing tobacco and in dipping snuff.

Tobacco contains nicotine. Nicotine is poisonous. It is addictive. It acts as a stimulant on the heart and other organs. When tobacco is taken into the body, nicotine can cause heart attacks and stomach ulcers. The nicotine and tars of tobacco also can cause cancers in the mouths, throats, and lungs of those who smoke, dip, or chew it. As much as 25 percent of the smoke particles of burnt tobacco is trapped on the lining of the lungs of smokers, and these particles can cause scar tissue on the walls of the air sacs of the lungs. Many smokers have emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

According to the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids, 400,000 deaths per year are attributed to smoking tobacco in the United States alone. Another 40,000 die per year from breathing second-hand smoke, and over 1,000 people die per year from fires caused by smoking (1997 figures). These statistics do not include the harmful effects of use of smokeless tobacco.

With these facts in mind, the Christian must consider the following scriptures:

**FOURTH ANNUAL  
UPON THE ROCK LECTURESHIP  
THEME: SUBMISSION THAT WINS!**

**SATURDAY. FEBRUARY 22. 2002**

**9:00 am “The Value of Trials” (James 1:2-4) -**

**A.J. Cox**

**10:00 am “Wisdom and Faith” (James 1:5-8) -**

**Jim Bullington**

**11:00 am “Doers of the Word (James 1:21-25) -**

**Mike Gors**

**12:00—1:30—Lunch is provided**

**1:30 pm Recognizing God in Our Affairs**

**(James 4:15-16) - Brandon Britton**

**SUNDAY. FEBRUARY 23. 2003**

**9:30 am “Prayer and Praise” (James 5:13-14)**

**Patrick Morrison**

**10:30 am “God Versus the World” (James 4:4-6)**

**Brandon Britton**

**6:00 pm “Resist the Devil” (James 4:15-16)**

**Greg Dismuke**

**Where: West Side Church of Christ**

**6600 W. Kilgore Ave.**

**Yorktown, IN. 47396**

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**JESUS IS RETURNING TO RAISE THE DEAD**

Albert Farley

The hope of eternal life has always been precious to Gods people. It is written of Abraham, who lived over 2,000 years before Christ "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Further, it is said of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his children, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" (Hebrews 11: 10-14).

Job is thought to have lived in the same period of time as did Abraham - that is, before the time of Moses. Job, in the midst of his extreme temptations and under the shadow of death, considered the hope of a tree that was cut down but which budded and lived again. Chapter 14. In this great distress, he cried, "If a man die, shall he live again?" and answered, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Later, he declared, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27).

David expressed this same hope - over 1,000 years before Christ came. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me ... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23:4, 6).

Isaiah, who lived over 700 years before Christ, believed in the resurrection, for he compared the restoration of the nation of Israel with the resurrection from the dead in chapter 26:19-20. Ezekiel spoke of the resurrection in the parable of the dry bones, almost 600 years before Christ (chapter 37). Finally, just a few years later, Daniel wrote, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall

awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever” (12:2-3). This belief in the resurrection is carried into the New Testament - as can be seen in the strong belief in the resurrection held by the Pharisees when Jesus was born (Acts 23:8).

Yes, when Jesus came into the world, God’s people had a strong belief in the resurrection; yet, it remained for Christ to more perfectly reveal it and to, in fact, make it possible by his own personal victory over sin, death, and the grave (1 Corinthians 15).

Jesus confirmed the truthfulness of the resurrection by the Old Testament scriptures. When the Sadducees challenged the resurrection, Jesus quoted the Word of God to Moses, recorded in Exodus 3:6, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Jesus said, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matthew 22:23-33). Of Himself, Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John said He spoke of the temple of His body (John 2:18-22). Later, when Martha confessed her faith in the resurrection of her brother, Lazarus, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:21-27).

The early church taught and preached that the resurrection is through Jesus (Acts 4:2). Paul said, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). The Father has given His Son the power to quicken (make alive) whom he will. John 5:21. Jesus said, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18).

The resurrection will occur on the last day. “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 5:39, 40, 44; 11:24). God has “appointed a day in the which he will judge

## JANUARY’S ISSUE

Theme: The Parables of Jesus

- The Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:10-14) - Patrick Morrison
  - The Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32) - Phil Gear
  - The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) - A.J. Cox
  - The Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) - Brandon Britton
- The Sower (Luke 8:4-15; Matthew 13:2-13) - Mark Reynolds
  - The Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21) - Edd Sterchi
  - The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) - Jim Bullington

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

- 1 Hear THE WORD OF GOD - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).
2. Believe THE WORD OF GOD - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).
3. Repent OF YOUR SINS - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).
4. Confess THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).
5. Be baptized FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS- (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4).
6. Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:16). Paul penned, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). As Christians we must be willing to suffer for Christ, and if need be, suffer even to the point of death! We must be on our guard, resist the devil, and be steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:9), and not allow anyone or anything to come between our Lord and us.

Everyday that goes by, every minute that ticks by on the clock, we are just that much closer to the return of Jesus, the end of the world, the end of time as we know it, and the judgment of all mankind. Paul wrote, “For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11). IF the Lord would come today, would you be prepared my friend? If the Lord had come yesterday, what would be you condition now if you have not obeyed the Gospel? (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). If you are an erring child of God, what would be your eternal fate if the Lord had come yesterday? (cf. Matthew 25:11-13; 7:21-23). One day men, women, and accountable young people who have not lived for the Lord, will look back in the realization that the Lord came yesterday. Then, it will be eternally too late!

Faithful children of God, those who are prepared and waiting the Lord’s coming can say with the apostle John, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20). Are you one of the prepared faithful? “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).

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the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). The Son of man will come in the clouds with great power and glory. “And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven” (Mark 13:27; cf. Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7).

All of the dead will be raised at Jesus’ coming. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). Both the just and unjust will be raised in the same hour (Acts 24:15). When the last day comes, “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Before we will be permitted to “ever be with the Lord,” however, we must be gathered together to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in our bodies (Matthew 25:31-46). John said, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Revelation 20:11-15). Are you ready for the coming of the Lord?

The resurrected body will be a spiritual body. It will be incorruptible, glorious, heavenly, and immortal. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will be changed. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”

(1 Corinthians 15:42- 58). It may be difficult to comprehend this new body, but we believe in its reality. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Paul wrote, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body ..." (Philippians 3:20-21).

Are you ready for the resurrection? We do not know when the day of the Lord will come. Jesus said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is (Mark 13:32-37). We urge you to prepare now.

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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

FROM THE EDITORS AND  
WRITERS

OF:

UPON THE ROCK

Christian, seeking to "be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10)?

To prepare for Jesus' return we ought t be an abstaining people. Peter wrote, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). Being "strangers and pilgrims" means that we are foreigners in this world who are traveling toward our heavenly home "for our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). Truly, as the song suggests, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue; The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, And I can't feel at home in this world anymore." To "abstain" means, "to keep oneself from." In particular, we must keep ourselves from "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." We are engaged in a spiritual war between good and evil. Satan seeks to destroy us! Through Christ, however, we can triumph! Are you gaining the victory in abstaining from sinful practices?

To prepare for Jesus' return we ought to be a people with unified, compassionate, and loving hearts. Peter wrote, "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8). The New Testament is filled with the command and admonition to "love one another" (cf. John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:7- 12; 4:20-21). Are you as loving, kind, understanding, and forgiving of your brethren as you ought to be?

To prepare for Jesus' return we ought to be a sacrificing people. Peter wrote, "You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). WE offer to God "spiritual sacrifices" through our faithful and regular worship as we worship Him in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). We must sacrifice of our time, energies, talents, and finances to further the cause of Christ and help others to prepare for the coming of Christ. Are you offering to God "such sacrifices" with which He "is well pleased"? (Hebrews 13:16).

To prepare for Jesus' return we ought to be a people willing to suffer for Christ. Peter wrote, "Yet, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him

important consideration. What is most important regarding Jesus' return is this: Will you and I be ready to meet Him when He comes? We must make preparation now, but how can we prepare for Jesus' return? In light of the fact of Jesus' second coming, the apostle Peter asked, "What manner of persons ought you to be?" (2 Peter 3:11). Notice some of the things from Peter's writings we "ought" to do to prepare for the Lord's return.

To prepare for Jesus' return we ought to be an obedient people. We become children of God by obedience to the truth. Peter wrote, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:22-23). Jesus said of the new birth, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The new birth is a spiritual birth that takes place in obedience to Christ's command to be immersed in His name "for the remission of sins" (cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Have you been "born again"?

To prepare for Jesus' return we ought to be a holy people. Peter wrote, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:14-15). To be "holy" we must live separate and apart from the sinful lifestyle of the world. Paul wrote that we must present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God...And do not be conformed to this world" (Romans 12:1-2). Are you living a life of holiness?

To prepare for Jesus return we ought to be a growing people. Peter wrote, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). How do we grow spiritually in Christ? We must have the proper spiritual nutrition! We must "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). We must grow spiritually by adding to our "faith, virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Peter 1:5-7). Are you growing as a

## JESUS IS RETURNING TO JUDGE THE WORLD

Mike Johnson

We sing the song, "There's a Great Day Coming". Jude 6 identifies this "great day" as the "judgment". Other texts refer to this day as the "day of judgment": Matthew 10:15; 11:22-24; 12:36; Mark 6:1; II Peter 2:9; 3:7 and I John 4:17. This day is "the day of the Lord" in I Corinthians 5:5; I Thessalonians 5:2 and II Peter 3:10. It is simply called "that day" in I Thessalonians 5:4; II Thessalonians 1:10; 2:3; II Timothy 1:12, 18 and 4:8.

Scripture is clear that there is coming a day of judgment when all who have ever lived will be judged. Paul put it this way in II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." On that day of judgment, all people will face the consequences for the lifestyles they chose.

Matthew 25:31-46 describes the events of that day. All nations will be gathered before Jesus who will be sitting on His throne. He will divide them into two groups called the sheep and the goats. The sheep will be told, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (verse 34). The goats will be told, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (verse 41).

There is an interesting word used to describe the manner in which each person will face those consequences. The word is "apodidomi" and it occurs 46 times in the New Testament. It means generally "to give up or give over". There are four specific senses of this word. It means "deliver" what is one's own. Pilate "gave" Jesus' body to Joseph for burial (Matthew 27:58). It is also used to describe something that is "delivered up from one's own possessions for profit". Peter used the word when he asked Sapphira if she and her husband had "sold" their land for this much money (Acts 5:8). This is also the concept when Joseph was "sold" into slavery (Acts 7:9). The Hebrews writer refers to Esau who "sold" his birthright to Jacob for a morsel of food (Hebrews 12:16).

It also carries the sense of “pay off or discharge a debt”. This is the meaning in Matthew 5:26, 33; 18:25-34; 20:8; 21:41; 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 7:42; 10:35; 12:59; 16:2; 20:25; Acts 4:33; 19:40; Romans 13:7; I Corinthians 7:3; I Timothy 5:4; Hebrews 12:11; 13:17; I Peter 4:5 and Revelation 22:2. It means “give back or restore” in Luke 4:20; 9:42; 19:8. Finally, it means “recompense” or give what is due. This is the meaning in Matthew 6:4, 6, 18; 16:27; Romans 2:6; 12:17; I Thessalonians 5:15; II Timothy 4:8, 14; I Peter 3:9 and Revelation 18:6; 22:12.

Two of these four senses are used in 5 texts about the coming judgment day. When we consider them, we gain a valuable understanding of the purpose of that great and terrible day of the Lord. Both “pay off” and “recompense” are used specifically of that day. The “pay off” refers to the individual who faces the judgment. The “recompense” refers to the Judge of the judgment.

### **HE IS RETURNING TO JUDGE THE WORLD AND A “PAY OFF” WILL BE DEMANDED**

There are two texts where the word “apodidomi” is used from the viewpoint of the individuals facing the judgment day. Jesus used the word in Matthew 12:36, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will *give account* of it in the day of judgment.” Peter used the word in I Peter 4:5, “They will *give an account* to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

This word is used in a financial sense in these two passages. It may best be understood as balancing the checkbook. Every so often we must make sure that the amount of money in our account is sufficient to cover the checks we have written. Either we will find that there is enough money to cover the outstanding checks or there is not. This is making an accounting of our financial situation.

Admittedly, this illustration is not perfect as no illustration is. There is no way that we will ever be able to do enough good to counterbalance the bad that we do. We can never be good enough on our own to stand on the positive side of the ledger.

## **ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?**

If a man would be a soldier, He'd expect of course to fight  
 And he couldn't be an author, If he didn't try to write.  
 So it isn't common logic, Doesn't have the right true ring; That a  
 man to be a Christian doesn't have to do a thing!  
 If a man would be a hunter, he must go among the trees; And he  
 couldn't be a sailor, if he wouldn't sail the seas.  
 How strange for any Christian to think he can be right,  
 When he fails to work and worship, and walk daily in the Light.  
 Author Unknown

## **PREPARING FOR HIS RETURN**

Robert Vincent

It has been calculated that there are over three hundred references in the New Testament to the fact that Jesus will come again. Jesus has promised that He will come again. He said to His disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3). At His ascension into heaven two angels declared to the apostles, “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). The apostle John penned, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him” (Revelation 1:7). Jesus' second coming is just as certain as was His first.

In the religious world today there are many false teachings concerning the return of Christ. Other than Jesus' death and resurrection, His second coming is of utmost importance. It is essential that people know the truth about this vital subject Why? So each person can make proper preparation for His return. As I have heard brethren often pray, the day when Jesus comes again is “the Day for which every other day has been made.” Concerning His second coming Jesus said, “But of that day and that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32). When Jesus is coming is not the most

answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:36-38). Simply, the eunuch was taught. He enquired about the stipulations and agreed to obey them. This account reveals the brevity and simplicity of the plan of salvation.

Notice the brief period of time within the conversion of the Philippian jailor. “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway” (Acts 16:32,33). The term “straightway” is significant of the fact that the response of the jailor and his household was handled immediately.

Certainly, the unpredictable nature of the coming of Christ has much to do with the simplicity of the plan of salvation. It would seem unfair to stress urgency yet impose stipulations of extreme difficulty. God’s desire is that all come to the knowledge of the truth. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16,17).

There is an automatic advantage in having knowledge of a future event. The problem is many do not take advantage of this favorable position. The fact that God has revealed this information to man is proof of His fairness and justice. This message of Christ’s coming judgment is being heralded with each passing day whether it be through men or the material elements (Psalms 19:1,2). God is faithful in warning every man against the circumstance of unexpectedness.

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It is true, however, that we must be forgiven of the sins we commit before we leave this world. It is unfortunate in both of the texts under consideration that there will be people who must give an accounting of sins which had not been forgiven because they never repented. They never accessed the saving blood of Jesus who had already paid the debt of sin. Now, their account is out of balance. There is a “pay off” demanded because of their own sins.

### **HE IS RETURNING TO JUDGE THE WORLD AND “RECOMPENSE” WILL BE GIVEN**

The other three texts refer to the judgment day from the standpoint of the Judge. Matthew 16:27 says, “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will *reward* each according to his works.” Romans 2:5-6 says, “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will *render* to each one according to his deeds.” Paul stated in II Timothy 4:8, “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will *give* to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

The word recompense means “to give compensation; to return in kind”. On the day of judgment, Jesus the Judge will “return in kind” to each individual according to the life he or she lived. The “compensation” will be just and fair. This event is succinctly described in John 5:28-29, “do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

### **CONCLUSION**

This final day will be a day of settling of accounts, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). All accounts will be settled before a Judge who already knows everything, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked

and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13).

For those washed in the blood of Jesus, it will be a debt-free day. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:8-9). Furthermore, Jesus “tasted death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9) so we would not need to. That which He tasted that we do not have to taste is not physical death (separation from life), but rather spiritual death (separation from God). Are you ready for this great day?

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## JESUS IS RETURNING TO SAVE THE RIGHTEOUS

Tim Nichols

There seems to be a tendency for many in our world to want to latch onto the beautiful promises of the Scriptures and to recite the pleasing sentiments that seem to require no response on the part of man, while completely ignoring the duties imposed by God’s word. Many bask in the sunlight of God’s love for the world, but shade themselves from God’s own declarations of His justice and resulting wrath. Funeral sermons, so often, seem to gloss over the fact that not all members of the human race are the recipients of all of God’s promised blessings. All of the positive thinking in the world will never remove the force of Scriptural declarations that Jesus is returning to save the righteous and to punish the wicked.

Paul wrote to a specific audience when he penned the first letter to the church in Thessalonica. He did not intend for his inspired message to faithful Christians to be picked up and read as though it were addressed to all mankind. He wrote to faithful Christians who were full of faith (1:8) who had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1:9) when he said: “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died

devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:27). Therefore, “watch” means to be living the life to the extent that one is confident in his or her relationship with God, thus content with the coming event. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward” (Hebrews 10:35). Confidence is the result of obedience.

The above paragraphs have been set forth to serve as edification to the believers, that they rejoice in the confidence we have in Christ. However, the non-believer must be taken into consideration when dealing with such a topic. Due to the unpredictable nature of the second coming of Christ, the call to obedience is urgent. In other words, this circumstance of inevitability demands an immediate response. The gospel from the beginning has been a message of urgency. It is simple to obey because it demands an immediate response. If the message was difficult perhaps there would be a lengthier process to undergo. “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:1,2). This passage is not only in reference to a particular dispensation, it is alluding to a specific moment as well, that moment being “now.” The simplicity of the gospel enables an individual to respond in a timely fashion. For example, take notice of a few of the conversions that took place in the book of Acts.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). After Peter preached the gospel to some 15 different nationalities, some were provoked to enquire about salvation. Peter told them what to do to be saved. His instruction resulted in 3,000 souls being added “the same day.” It was not a process that required a lengthy period of time.

The account of the Ethiopian eunuch provides a scenario in which an individual responded and was baptized immediately. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he

This act of terrorism would have undoubtedly been met with forces fully capable of defending the American people, if there were knowledge beforehand. But, there was no foreknowledge to aid in the prevention of the attacks. In other words, preparation would have made for successful prevention.

There are some occurrences that lack a powerful and lasting impact due to the exercise of foresight. How often do you hear the statement, "I saw that coming"? Every rational human being possesses the ability to detect the occurrence of a future event due to circumstances of inevitability. It is inevitable that the second coming of Christ will occur. However, the factor of impact is that the coming will be unexpected despite awareness of the inevitable. This circumstance calls for preparation.

Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians was to impress upon their minds the importance of being prepared due to the uncertainty of the second coming of Christ. He begins by manifesting to them his awareness of their wisdom in regards to the manner in which Christ would come. "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thessalonians 5:1,2). The term "thief" was used to bring to light the factor of unexpectedness. However, Paul emphasizes the necessity of being prepared because of the unpredictable nature of this event "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thessalonians 5:6).

Certainly, the term "watch" is in reference to the Christian "looking for and hasting to the coming day of God" as stated in II Peter 3:12. It is possible to anxiously anticipate such an event despite its destructive nature. Paul says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (II Corinthians 5:1,2). To possess such confidence is impossible to do if one is not "walking by faith" (II Corinthians 5:7). All persons lacking faithfulness to the will of God can only expect "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall

and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

His words encourage faithful Christians to comfort one another in the knowledge that Jesus will come again for all of His saints, both living and dead. Paul's inspired words take the victory and the sting away from the grave for those who mourn the loss of those who "sleep in Jesus." The words also pronounce the sad condition of those who are outside of Christ: without hope.

Lest all those who read these words conclude, prematurely, that they are in the category of the saved, let us briefly note those categories of souls who are not the objects of God's promises and salvation.

Those who have sinned have separated themselves from God (Isaiah 59:2). Those who have not obeyed the Gospel remain in that separated condition (John 8:24). Our Lord is not coming to take these to glory. That is why we must preach the Gospel to them.

Those who have obeyed the Gospel and have ceased to walk in the light of God's Word will not be among those who meet our Lord in the air. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now" (1 John 2:9), "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them

according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire' (2 Peter 2:20-22). Those who "crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame" (Hebrews 6:6) cannot hope to be among those for whom Jesus will come again. If they remain in that condition "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27). This is why we must teach, edify and encourage one another daily.

(Continued on Page 15)

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When we can discover the wickedness in ourselves or help another individual who has obeyed the Gospel to discover sin in their lives, we can yet do what Peter told Simon the sorcerer to do: "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray to God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22). God will once again restore to us the joy of His salvation and we can once again teach transgressors His ways (Psalm 51:12,13). Even after David had sinned grievously and repented of his wickedness, God was still "the God of [his] salvation" (Psalm 51:14). God will not despise a "broken and contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17).

Jesus will return again for His people. That is certain. You have the ability to be among those for whom He comes. That is equally clear in the Scriptures. Our Lord is returning for the righteous who have been made so by the cleansing blood that Jesus shed on the cross. May all who read these words choose to be ready when He comes.

Tim Nichols may be reached at Route 1, Box 206 A, Burlington, WV. 26710.

## **JESUS IS RETURNING UNEXPECTEDLY**

Matthias Collins

September 11th is a moment in time that will be in the minds of the American people for generations to come. Much can be said about this tragic event. However, from the loss of lives to the destruction and demolition of two of the world's largest structures, there is a factor about the event that was responsible for the magnitude of the impact. The factor of unexpectedness. For it is with every day that we find ourselves tending to the demands of a flourishing society. So much so that there is very little time to think about or anticipate potential occurrences that are far removed from the normality of life, although there is an awareness of the possibility. Knowing that something is possible is a far cry from actually experiencing that which is considered a possibility. In spite of this awareness, a tragic event such as September 11th still manages to deal a powerful blow due to its unexpectedness.