

## CHRIST'S RETURN IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS AND 1 JOHN

One of the things we look forward to when Christ returns is the renewal of our bodies. We have no idea what that will actually look like, but we do know we will finally be everything God created us to be.

*PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

*1 JOHN 3:1-3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup>Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, <sup>r</sup> we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup>All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*

1. What does Paul mean when he tells us, “our citizenship is in heaven?” What does it mean to live as citizens of heaven?
2. According to Paul what will happen to our bodies when Christ appears?
3. According to John what will be the catalysts for transformation?
4. How does living with this hope purify us now?

## A WORD FROM JAMES AND PETER

*1 PETER 1:3-6 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*

*JAMES 5:7-9 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming.*

1. According to Peter what can we expect when Christ returns?
2. According to Peter what can we expect until He returns?
3. Why do we need to be patient until the Lord's coming?
4. How should we live until the Lord returns?



It is frustrating when someone reveals the plot line of a Netflix series we're looking forward to watching. Half the fun is experiencing the twists and turns along the way, and anticipating how the story will end. If you have to talk out of turn, at least have the decency to announce “spoiler alert” ahead of time, so we can duck out of the conversation and experience the story for ourselves.

When it comes to the storyline of the Bible, however, it's good that we know where the story is going and how it will end. The end of the story not only shapes how we read the rest of the story, it dramatically shapes how we live our lives.

Over the past few weeks, we've considered the life of Christ, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the exaltation of Christ. This week we turn our attention to the return of Christ. We will not spend a lot of time arguing for one millennial position over another, or exactly who the “man of lawlessness” might be. We all have our opinions, but sometimes we get so distracted by the details that we miss the point. Right now we want to talk about what we can expect when Christ returns, and perhaps even more importantly, how we should live until He returns.

We will survey some of the key passages in the New Testament and draw some thoughtful conclusions along the way.

## CHRIST'S RETURN IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

From the opening chapter of Acts, we are left anticipating Christ's return. Christ's return also plays a prominent role in the preaching of the Apostles.

### The Promise of Christ's Return

*ACTS 1:9-11 he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. <sup>10</sup> They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*

### Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

*ACTS 2:32-36 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. <sup>33</sup> Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, " 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand <sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ' <sup>36</sup> "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."*

### Peter's Address to the Crowd in The Temple Court

*ACTS 3:19-21 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, <sup>20</sup> and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.*

### Paul's Sermon at Athens

*ACTS 17:29-31 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."*

1. According to these passages what are some things we can expect when Christ returns?
2. According to Peter (acts 3:19) how should we respond to the prospect of Christ's return?
3. What does Peter promise will happen when we repent and turn to the Lord?
4. What do you think he means by "times of refreshing?"

## CHRIST'S RETURN IN PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS

There seemed to be a lot of confusion surrounding Christ's return in Paul's day. Paul deals with the subject extensively in his correspondence with the Corinthians and the Thessalonians. The Corinthians did not believe in a physical resurrection or a literal return of Christ. The Thessalonians thought that their friends and loved ones who had gone home to be with the Lord would miss out on the glory of his return. In 1 Thessalonians Paul reassures his readers that no one will miss out. In 2 Thessalonians he addresses the great reversal that will take place at Christ's return.

*1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-17 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

*2 THESSALONIANS 1:5-10 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. <sup>6</sup> God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you <sup>7</sup> and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might <sup>10</sup> on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.*

1. What do you find encouraging in Paul's correspondence with the believers in Thessalonica?
2. What do you find difficult, or perhaps even disheartening?
3. Jim Hamilton has written a Biblical Theology entitled "God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment." Though the title is a bit jarring it does make an important statement about the character of God. How is God glorified in salvation? How is God glorified in judgment?
4. Why do you think we have a hard time talking about God's judgment?
5. How should God's coming judgment shape the way we live, act and think right now?