

The Second Coming: Will Our Lord Return in the 2020s?

2020 begins as the first year of the new decade of the 2020s—100 years since the famed “Roaring Twenties” of the last century.

Prophetically, we might wonder if this is the year in which our Lord Jesus will return! And, if it is, how that relates to:

- The resurrection of those who have died “in the Lord.”
- The rapture of the living saints.
- The great tribulation of Satan.
- The end-times judgments and rewards of God.

Those are all things we read about in both the Old and New Testaments.

Pew Research Center reports that 48% of all Christians in the United States not only believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ, but believe it is going to occur within the next four decades (basically, within their own lifetimes). If that belief is proven to be true, think of the dramatic implications it should have immediately for every person on earth!

No wonder the apostle Paul used the Second Coming as the primary reason for right living right now, since “time is running out” and “the coming of the Lord is nearer now than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11, TLB).

Jesus told His disciples that no one actually knows the day or hour of His return, “not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt. 24:36, MEV).

While the exact time of Christ's promised return (John 14:1-4; Acts 1:7-11) is uncertain, the timing—pointing to the divine sequence or season—will become clearer the closer we get to the final apocalyptic revelation itself. For example, Daniel's prophecies were to be "sealed ... until the time of the end," when knowledge and experience will help the wise, spiritually minded to discern and understand the meanings (Dan. 12:4-10).

Things Preceding Our Lord's Return

In the same discourse with the disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus projected warfare as a way of life throughout this present age. The political turmoil and military mayhem will be accompanied by "famines and earthquakes" in place after place.

For the Jewish people, these will be the "beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:5-13) during the first half (3.5 years) of Daniel's Seventieth Week and continue as intolerable anguish as "Jacob's Troubles" during the final 3.5 years of the week of years described by Daniel (12:5-7) and John (Rev. 6) in the Seal Judgments.

In Matthew 24, Jesus predicted the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem as foreshadowing the future, fateful days, which He called the Great Tribulation, where the Antichrist will desecrate a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and break a covenant of protection for the defenseless Jewish people of that time.

He will proceed to severely persecute the remaining Jews and believing Gentiles in unprecedented evil ways. Jesus said that unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But, "for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" by the rapture and resurrection of the saints (Matt. 24:22).

During those seven years, fulfilling Daniel's Seventieth Week prophecy, some students of eschatology even see spiritual renewal and revival, as a result of the testimony of the Two

Witnesses (Rev. 11:1-14), the 144,000 sealed Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:1-8) and the "Gospel Angel" (Rev. 14:9-12), just before the "harvest of the earth" by the angels of the Lord (Matt. 24:31).

The apostle Paul gives us added insights of events to happen before "the day of Christ," when He will come in wrath to execute vengeance upon "those who do not know God" or "obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8).

Paul taught the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:1-12) there must first be a great apostasy or "falling away" and the Antichrist (called "the son of perdition") is finally revealed by his desecration of a new Jewish temple in Jerusalem. This is allowed after a God-appointed "restrainer" steps aside to allow an "unrighteous deception" by this "lawless one."

There are many quickly moving parts to the Trumpet Judgments of God's Wrath (Rev. 8-9) and the climaxing Bowl Judgments (Rev. 16), which may happen in a matter of weeks!

Peter reminds us that the Lord has been slow to wrath, not wanting any to perish. But, what has been slow to come, ends rapidly and conclusively. Our God reigns.

Things Concurrent With our Lord's Return

Our Lord's long-awaited sequenced-return is specifically said to begin "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29) and before the relatively rapid discharge of the Trumpet Judgments followed by the final Day of the Lord, with its righteous vengeance and wrath.

These glorious Omega-times events seem to happen in rapid order, as our Lord's promised return to earth unfolds, like a glorious panorama or extended procession:

"The sun and moon darken, and the stars withdraw their radiance" (Joel 2:10).

“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. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt. 24:29-31).

Then, our Lord claims His own, those whom He purchased with His blood on the cross. Paul describes it as beginning with a mighty shout of creative power by the Lord Himself, joined with a commanding voice of an archangel and with the “last trumpet” of God (1 Cor. 15:52). First, the dead saints of the ages will be resurrected from all around the world and then the living saints will be “caught up” or raptured heavenward with transformed, heavenly bodies to meet the resurrected ones, including Christ, in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Hallelujah!

How Should We Live as We Await our Lord’s Return?

Jesus told the early disciples, and now us, that “the end is not yet” (Matt. 24:6). There are many circumstances and predictions that must align before He will “send His angels ... and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt. 24:31).

But, if He doesn’t return this year, is it possible He will return during this decade? Or in your lifetime? How should we live, as we await our Lord’s return?

Let’s learn from the apostle Paul, who taught:

“... now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us take off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly, as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in immorality and wickedness, not in strife

and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:11-14).
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