

XII. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“The Second Coming of Christ”

I Thessalonians 4:13–17

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

May 3, 2015 – Evening Sermon

In this series we have taken time to focus in on timeless truths for timely topics. One of those topics is addressing the interest in the end times, the doctrine of eschatology. We have looked at the matter of the millennium, the rapture, tribulation and the seventy weeks of Daniel. I will go back over all this in this study in order to a distillation statement on the second coming of Christ. I did tell you I would say when the time would be but I will go ahead and tell you the date and time is not coming but I will share with you the five things that will declare the time of Christ’s coming from the Scripture. I will first walk you through five texts that we have already covered but I will go through this rapidly while I enunciate some things for you. After we look at these five texts we’ll look at this distillation of five factors affirming the second coming of Christ. Then I will answer to the best of my ability why Christ hasn’t come yet. We will start by looking at Matthew 24.

Before I get started I had someone ask me if they should even be interested in the matters of pre-millennial, a-millennial, or post-millennial and they said they felt like things would just pan out in the end. So why should we get so excited about this? There are Bible believers that have come out in different areas because the Bible is very specifically non-specific about certain things concerning the second coming. It is broad strokes, with apocalyptic literature, many symbols and a lot of metaphors so we need to have a sanctified agnosticism which is ‘I just don’t know for sure.’ We know Jesus is coming back and that there will be a judgment and that there will be a new heavens and a new earth for those in Christ. So is that thousand year symbolic or is it an actual 365 days in each year for the thousand years? There is room for us to disagree and agree on the end times but it does not mean it has many interpretations. It just means there is room for charity in our interpretation of these matters as believers work their way through it trying to understand Biblically but the second coming is not an unimportant doctrine.

When you know the destination, what’s coming and how things are moving that affects how you live now and the decisions you make now. So I want us to know that the “blessed Hope” which is what the Bible calls the second coming of Christ, has a purpose. John says the blessed Hope is the Hope that purifies. It is an instrument in sanctifying, purifying, refining and transforming. It is not something to be disinterested about even though charitable but it is good to be knowledgeable about.

Let’s start by looking at Matthew 24:1–28 which says [1] *Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. [2] But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”*

[3] *As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” [4] And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. [5] For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many*

astray. [6] And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. [7] For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. [8] All these are but the beginning of the birth pains (creation and all of humanity is groaning to be delivered from the presence of sin to the presence of God).

[9] “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. [10] And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. [11] And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. [12] And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. [13] But the one who endures to the end will be saved. [14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

[15] “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), [16] then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. [17] Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, [18] and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. [19] And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! [20] Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. [21] For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. [22] And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. [23] Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. [24] For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. [25] See, I have told you beforehand. [26] So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. [27] For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [28] Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

In Matthew 24:15– 22 He is giving the description of what is going to happen to Jerusalem that will occur around the abomination of desolation and this will be something that happens that had never happened before. It is the continuation of the sacrifices in the temple after the sacrifice of Christ. The generation that continues that is the generation that will see this great tribulation that will come upon the kingdom of Israel which will stop the kingdom of Israel and be given to the church to spread throughout the world with the preaching of the Gospel.

Then He moves to the third question the disciples had about the second coming telling there would be an intensification of more tribulation upon God’s people with false religions doing false signs, wonders and miracles done with amazing power. There will also be false teachers, preachers and christs. Then when Christ comes it will be like lightning, a momentary flash and when He comes there will be a culture that is a corpse of death. The work of depravity will have produced cultures of death throughout the world and this will happen because right before the coming of Christ Satan will be loosed for a short season and will return to deceive nations. For now he is bound but not paralyzed and is active but can’t stop the work of the Gospel in common grace and redeeming grace to the nations. There will be the beast of political power, the beast of the sea, the prostitute of Babylon and the anti-christ to deceive the nations, with Satan

being loosed for a short season and then Christ comes like lightning in which He will bring the end.

Matthew 24:29–31 says [29] *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. [30] Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, 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. [31] And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* This is the Biblical doctrine of the rapture of Christ’s return and gathering His people up to Himself in order to deposit them in the new heavens and a new earth. So what should you do? Let’s continue.

Matthew 24:32–51 says [32] *“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. [33] So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. [34] Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. [35] Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

[36] *“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. [37] For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [38] For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, [39] and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Just as it was in the days of Noah, God took away the unbeliever and so will it be when He returns.) [40] Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. [41] Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. [42] Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. [43] But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

[45] *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? [46] Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. (You are living your life faithfully when He comes, living in light of the fact that He is coming.) [47] Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. [48] But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ [49] and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, [50] the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know [51] and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

There is a subtle thing here that I want you to see. No one knows the day and the time. When He comes it is like lightning but God’s people will be found faithful and sensing the Lord is near. It will come upon the unbeliever like lightning, like a thief in the night because they will not be looking and they will not be sensing. When He comes the unbeliever will be taken away in judgment and the believer, left behind, will be caught up to be with the Lord and deposited in a new heavens and a new earth. Now I’d like to look at a second text.

Let's look at I Thessalonians 4. Jesus had not come back yet and Paul had taught that Christ was coming soon so the Thessalonians wanted to know what had happened to their brothers who had already died. I Thessalonians 4:13–18 says [13] *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. [14] For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. [15] For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] 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. [17] 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. [18] Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

I Thessalonians 5:1–11 says [1] *Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. [2] For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. [4] But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. [5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. [6] So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. [9] For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us so that whether we are awake (living) or asleep (dead) we might live with him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

Now let's look at II Thessalonians 2. This is another key text. II Thessalonians 2:1–10 says [1] *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, [2] not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. [3] Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first (that season of Satan's loosening), and the man of lawlessness (Paul's term for the anti-christ) is revealed, the son of destruction, [4] who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. [5] Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? [6] And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. [7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. [8] And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. [9] The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, [10] and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*

The way is being paved in the professing church today for this. Why? It is because we do not seek churches that faithfully preach and teach the Word of God but we

seek experiences. In the seeking of experiences we begin to build our faith on the experience instead of the truth and Satan is there with false signs, wonders and miracles to deceive with power beyond your explanation. That is what he does but not God's people. Let's continue.

II Thessalonians 2:11–12 says [11] *Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, [12] in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* The passage goes on to call us to stand firm in the truth. Now I'd like to give you a little bonus and look at I Corinthians 15 for a moment because it fits in so wonderfully here. Here is the anticipation of the coming of Christ.

I Corinthians 15:50–58 says [50] *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. [51] Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. [53] For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. [54] When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

[55] *“O death, where is your victory?*

O death, where is your sting?”

[56] *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

[58] *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

Jesus, who has defeated sin, death, hell, Satan and the grave, when He comes again will destroy them all. Then we will be raised with an imperishable body and to be with the Lord in a new heavens and a new earth with a body prepared for eternity. Now let's look at II Peter 3.

II Peter 3:1–7 says [1] *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, [2] that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, [3] knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4] They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” [5] For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, [6] and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

Here the scoffers are saying everything continues as it is but Peter says no and that they have escaped two things. One is the creation. There was nothing, God spoke and from nothing came everything and that's why the doctrine of creation is crucial. He answers the mockers by pointing them first to the doctrine of creation. The second thing they missed was the day that God deluged this world with a flood. Mountains were made

into valleys and valleys were made into mountains. Continents were split asunder and the Psalmist describes this deluge that God brought in judgment. It was in that day that God kept Noah and his covenant family and then deposited them in a refurbished heavens and earth, cleansed by God's judgment of water. Then man continues in sin but the Kingdom expands through the work of grace and the kingdom of darkness strikes back. Peter says the same thing will happen again. The Word of the Lord at creation and at the flood will be the Word of the Lord at the coming of Christ but this time it won't be water but fire. This time My people will be deposited in a new heavens and a new earth.

II Peter 3:8–13 says [8] *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* (He is not giving us a formula but telling us He is omniscient, omnipotent and eternal) [9] *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* [10] *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

[11] *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,* [12] *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!* [13] *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

What is this hastening? He is not late. He is coming at the right time. Why is He late? He has not come because He is patience toward all of us is not wishing for any of you should perish. The 'all of us' is the beloved according to II Peter 3:8. God hasn't come, why? It is because all of the beloved have not repented. He will not lose one of His elect. Let's see this in the first letter of Peter as well. I Peter 1:1a says [1a] *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect...* Jesus hasn't come back because all the elect haven't been converted and He won't come back until this happens for He will not lose one that the Father has given to Him. When that last one comes in, then He comes. So He is patient, not because He is late, but because He is doing the timely work of converting the elect.

So how can I hasten the coming of the Lord? It is called evangelism. It is called sharing the Gospel. Every time I share the Gospel with someone and they pray to receive Jesus, this is in my mind. This could be the last one. Come on Jesus! He will not come until they are all gathered in with the Gospel drag net that you and I are throwing throughout the world. The last text I'd like to look at is in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:1–3, 7–10 says [1] *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.* [2] *And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,* [3] *and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*

[7] *And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison* [8] *and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog (anti-christ) and Magog (followers of the anti-christ), to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.* [9] *And they marched up over the broad*

plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, [10] and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. The following verses in this chapter describe the judgment seat where all of this will happen.

I want to close by giving you five things that will happen before Christ's coming. First of all, He will not come until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and that is what He says in Matthew 24. Secondly, He will not come until the Gospel has been preached to all the nations under continued tribulation. People will have to give up their lives to preach the Gospel to the nations. People are going to lose their lives for the Gospel to go to all the nations. People are going to lose their lives when they come to Christ for the Gospel to go to all the nations. They will find their life but then many will be called to lose their life and that's why Paul says we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. There will be increasing tribulation against the church but the church will prevail. The gates of hell will not prevail against it but they will try to prevail.

God is in sovereign control and He is even using Satan's work and the evil empire to strike back and accomplish His purposes. How can God accomplish good things when He lets Satan do things against the church? What was the worst thing that has ever happened on this earth that Satan was desiring to happen? It was the crucifixion of Jesus and there you go saved. Satan's designs were God's sovereign purposes whereby He accomplishes our redemption.

Thirdly, Jesus will not return until there is the salvation of all of the elect. He will not lose one of them. That's why what seems to be slow in His return is that He will come at the right time and the right time is when all of His has been gathered. He is patient to bring all of the beloved to repentance and relationship with Him.

Fourthly, He won't come until there has been a loosening of Satan for a short season to resume the deception of the nations.

Finally, He will not come until "the" first beast, "the" second beast, and "the" anti-christ with a great tribulation consummating in that battle on the broad plain called Armageddon. The reason I emphasize "the" first beast, second beast and anti-christ is because there have been many first beasts already which are political empires against God but there is going to be one final gathering of all the empires of this world against God. There will be "the" second beasts and since then there have been apostate religions and relations ever since the ascension of Jesus and the church was planted in Jerusalem. But there will be "the" second beast which will be false religions and false prophets of this world that will stand against the Lord to do the bidding of the first beast. There will be the prostitute of Babylon as sexual immorality will shape the culture in those days. The leadership of the first and second beast will know how to use the eroticism of sexual licentiousness to accomplish it. There have also been many anti-christs and John tells us this but there will be "the" man of lawlessness that will come and then will come the end.

So when is Jesus coming? That is when I think He is coming. This is my opinion at this point. The destruction of Jerusalem has been done. The Gospel to all the nations can have a case made for that ever since Pentecost but the longer Jesus waits the more we see how the Gospel keeps unfolding to more and more nations. So we need to hasten the coming of the Lord by reaching all the nations for Christ. Be a mission's committed church hastening the coming of the Lord by getting the Gospel to all the nations. We

need to keep evangelizing for that is why Jesus hasn't come back yet. All the elect have not been reached yet.

Where the loosening of Satan for a short season is concerned, it is my opinion that Jesus is coming soon. He is near. He is coming. My great grandfather, grandfather and dad all said that Jesus is coming soon also but I think I'm more right than they were. It is because I'm not living in a pagan nation that is doing the bidding of Satan but I am living in a nation that has known the blessings of the Gospel, common grace and redeeming grace and now calls good, evil and evil, good. How deceived must you be? One of the evidences I see is a nation seemingly deceived that once was enlightened.

There is another possibility. This may not be the short season and the deceiving of Satan but this may be the Lord getting us ready for another Gospel awakening. Which do I think it is? I don't know and if I did I probably wouldn't tell you because I want us to get out with the Gospel. I want us to pray, long and preach and do everything we can for that Gospel awakening in this nation and to all the nations. But do I see some evidences of Satan's deception of the nations? I do.

Concerning the first and second beasts, we've always had a first beast with political empires against God, we've always had apostate denominations that have professed Christianity that now depart from it and do the bidding of the state but it is being done now like never before. It's certainly not going to be popular even in this culture to be faithful to Christ so you and I are going to get a chance to see what our forefathers went through in the first and second centuries and what they are going through in many parts of the world now, unless God gives that Gospel awakening.

I'm not looking to be a martyr but I'm willing to be one. I would love to see a movement of the Gospel but it won't happen without a people who are faithful to the truth and not being deceived by the false religions of this world, the false religion of liberalism in Christianity and the false religion of pragmatism whereby we give up Gospel truths thinking we're going to get people into the church if we give them up. By God's grace we have to be faithful and I believe that is what will hasten the coming of the Lord.

So why hasn't Jesus come back yet? I pray all the time, "Jesus, come quickly" and I want to live with that prayer which means I want to be a mission's minded Christian in church and I want the Gospel to the nations. I want to be faithful even when Satan deceives the nations and is loosed for a season. And I want to be evangelizing; sharing Christ with others that the elect might be brought into to Christ. Then I want to be ready to stand firm and take every thought captive unto the obedience of Jesus Christ. So now you know what has to happen when Jesus returns. Some of it has, some of it is and obviously some of it is yet to happen or He would be back. I will let Him take care of that. My job is to light the lamp and be found faithful when He comes. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the time we could be in Your Word. Thank You for this opportunity to walk through some of these issues in this season of the life of our congregation. I thank You for the way we can share this and know this so that we live in light of the victory of Christ, in full knowledge of the coming consummation of that victory when He returns, to know that we live in a world that increasingly will not only speak against You but will speak against You by assaulting Your people, but You are

with us. In the world we have tribulation but in Christ we have peace so we will take courage for You have overcome the world and You are coming soon. Come quickly Lord Jesus. Make us faithful. Find us faithful and You come. O Lord, how we long for that new heavens and new earth. We groan to be delivered but we will not be idol. We would seek to be faithful, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

A Brief Overview of Five Key Texts

1. Matthew 24
2. I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
3. II Thessalonians 2:1-12
4. II Peter 3:1-13
5. Revelation 20

An Affirmation of Five Factors

1. The Destruction of Jerusalem and Temple
2. Gospel to all the nations and continual tribulation
3. The salvation of all the Elect
4. "Loosening of Satan for a short season" resuming the "deception of the nations"
5. Revelation of "the" first beast, second beast and antichrist with a Great Tribulation-Armageddon