

Jesus' second coming and my daily living \* September 10, 2017  
Matthew 24, 1 Thessalonians 4, 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 19  
Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

This morning's question is our final Q from the pew. I don't know about you but I've certainly enjoyed this summer, thinking every week about some new and fascinating thing that you have asked about. I expect that we will do this again next summer, so if you think of questions through the year, jot them down and we'll take them on next summer.

Before we move on though, we have one final question to handle and it is just as fascinating as all the other questions we've thought about this summer – the second coming of Jesus.

Now I'll be honest – I actually intended to combine two suggestions in one for this morning – I had one slip of paper handed to me that said 'Revelation' and one slip of paper that said 'the second coming' – so I thought "I'll just mash them together and handle them at the same time."

When I got into it though, I realized that if we were really going to get into the second coming, we would need more than just Revelation, and so we will look at Revelation and but we'll also look at the other major passages that tell us about when Jesus comes again.

Now talking about Jesus' second coming gets us into some very interesting territory – this is end times stuff – the rapture, the tribulation, the millennium – and it would be very easy to talk for hours about what all of that means. Lest we get lost in endless speculation though, I think that we need to focus on this question – What does Jesus' second coming mean for my daily living? What does Jesus' return mean for me in the midst of the everyday grind?

To answer that question, I want to explore three more with you:

When will it be?

What will it mean?

How do we get ready?

When will it be (when is the second coming going to happen?)

What will it mean (why is the second coming important?)

And How do we get ready? (What should we be doing as we wait?)

What does Jesus' second coming mean for my daily living?

Let's get into it and find out!

When will it be?

Ever since Jesus ascended into heaven I think people have been wondering when He was coming back and there is no shortage of people who have put a date on the calendar and said 'this is when Jesus is

going to return.’ I remember hearing a radio broadcast about one of those predictions back in 2011 and I’m sure that many of you have seen these come and go in your lifetime.

But here’s the thing – they come and go. It’s always a little awkward when that day comes and its business as usual.

And I don’t want to take away from these people in their effort to prepare for Jesus’ return – that’s a very important thing to do – but I don’t know how they overlook a very obvious biblical fact:

We don’t know when Jesus will return.

I mean, not even Jesus knew when He was coming back.

We’re going to spend a lot of time in Matthew 24 today, so now’s a good time to find that in your Bibles. Jesus spends a lot of time talking about the end of the age in chapters 24-25 and right in the middle of it, 24, verse 36, He says –

36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

So tell me, if Jesus didn’t know when He was coming back, does it make sense that we should be able to identify the day and the hour? No. We can’t know because it will be entirely unexpected. Jesus continues, verse 37 -

37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Mat 24:36-39 NIV).

Sudden. Unexpected. Unpredictable.

Jesus goes on in verse 43 to compare His coming to the arrival of a thief and both Peter and Paul pick up that imagery in their letters. 2 Peter 3:10 – Peter says ‘the day of the Lord will come like a thief’ and 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul writes - 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" (1 Thess 5:2-3).

In fact, Jesus Himself uses the thief image again in the book of Revelation – He says very specifically in chapter 16 – 15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake...").

A thief’s arrival is unexpected and unpredictable.

Jesus' arrival will be like a thief's – sudden, unexpected and unpredictable, so we can't know the day and the hour when He will return.

Now while that's true, the Bible does seem to say that Jesus' return will come on the heels of a number of events and Matthew 24 lays those out most clearly – Matthew 24, starting at verse 6 –

6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

There will be international conflict and then Jesus will return.

Verse 7 continues - There will be famines and earthquakes in various places [and then Jesus will return].

8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Verse 9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. There will be persecution and then Jesus will return and verse 10

10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, There will be apostasy and then Jesus will return.

11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. And then Jesus will return.

But it's not all bad news -

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. When Jesus returns.

And then verse 15 – Jesus says – "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--

16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Mat 24:15-16 NIV).

Now this abomination of the desolation may seem obscure to us, but the flow of the Bible shows that it is pretty intricately connected to Jesus' return, so let's pause and unpack it a little.

First of all, what's the abomination of desolation? There are two hints in what Jesus says – Daniel talked about it and it's in the holy place.

In Daniel, the abomination is something, someone actually who tricks people into ignoring God and instead gets them to worship it. The abomination is an evil being who sets itself up in the place of God.

And the fact that it's doing this 'in the holy place' is an issue – because – what's the holy place? That's the central spot in the temple – in a sense God's dwelling place on earth (to the OT mind). So not only does this thing try to take God's place, it literally tries to kick Him out.

Now this character appears again in the NT, and again, it has to do with when Jesus returns – Paul is talking about Jesus’ second coming – people are worried that the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming has already happened – so Paul says – 2 Thessalonians 2 -

3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

That’s the abomination – the man of lawlessness is the abomination. And you know what? He has another name too. Think back to our Revelation series last year – the King and the Beasts – do you remember a figure who set himself up in the place of God and insisted people worship it instead?

It’s the beast from Revelation 13 – remember? 10 horns, seven heads, 10 crowns? Rev13:4-5 – “they worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” And the beast slandered the name of God.”

It’s the anti-christ. The abomination of the desolation, the man of lawlessness, the beast – this the antichrist. A year ago I said that there have been various manifestations of the antichrist throughout history, but when the BIG ONE comes, that means that Jesus is coming soon.

We’ll pick that up in a minute, but let’s just close off this question – when is Jesus coming? There are signs that indicate His coming, but, to be completely honest, we don’t know. He will come unexpectedly.

So that leads us to our next question – What’s He going to do when He gets here? what will Jesus’ return mean? I want to focus on two things – the beginning of the end for evil and the beginning of eternity for believers.

So first, Jesus’ return will mean the beginning of the end for evil. Let’s pick up 2 Thessalonians 2 – the man of lawlessness, the antichrist, sets himself up in the place of God and that means that before long Jesus will return. Now tell me, the embodiment of evil has deceived God’s people, has slandered God and has attempted to take over God’s throne. Do you think that Jesus will come along and say to this imposter – ha ha very funny now run along? Nope.

2 Thessalonians 2– verse 8 -

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

Jesus’ return means the beginning of the end for evil. The antichrist personifies that evil and he’s going to get stomped. Every wrong ever done will be held accountable and Jesus will dish out justice with perfect wisdom and fairness.

We actually get a very vivid picture of that in Revelation and again, the antichrist is linked to Jesus' second coming - flip back to Revelation 19 and there it is, clear as day – starting at verse 11 –

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.

12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.

15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ... (sounds like the breath of His mouth that destroys the lawless one in 2 Thess)....

19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh

(No drama there). Just boom – Jesus returns, Jesus conquers, evil gets theirs.

In the words of 2 Thessalonians 2 - “The Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.”

Now I do say the beginning of the end and not the conclusive end because as Revelation unfolds, we see that there is a final battle yet to come – Satan gathers up all his forces for one last stand, but the outcome is the same. God triumphs over evil.

Jesus return is the beginning of end for evil.

Now Jesus' return is also the beginning of eternal life for believers.

You know, thinking about what I just said, I can't help but realize the dilemma that puts us in. See we want justice – we want evil to be repaid – we want people who hurt us to get what they deserve – but here's the dilemma – I've hurt other people. I deserve justice. We are all participants in the evil that will be destroyed when Jesus' returns. All of us will be held accountable when He comes.

But here's the beauty of the Gospel – what really makes it Good News. Jesus second coming will be just that – His SECOND coming.

He came once before, taking on flesh, living a perfect life and then dying the death that sin deserved. God held Jesus accountable for my sin, for my evil, so that He could buy me back. So that He could redeem you. When we admit that sin and trust the Lord, our sins are dealt with and Jesus' second coming becomes not something to dread, but something to long for. It's the beginning of that eternal life that Jesus paid so dearly for and yet offers so freely.

Matt 24 puts it like this - "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky... They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. (That's Revelation 19, that's 2 Thessalonians 2:8). 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather

his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Mat 24:30-31 NIV). And thus begins eternal life for all who believe.

Paul says that explicitly in 1 Thessalonians 4 – look at verse 16 -

16 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.

17 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 (1Th 4:15-17 NIV).

Jesus' return means the beginning of eternal life for us – and what a life it will be. Revelation 21 – He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Jesus' second coming kicks off that life.

So I think that that begs the question – How should we prepare?

Apparently there's an asteroid up in outer space called Bennu. NASA estimates that it will come cataclysmically close to Earth in about 80 years and so they're sending an \$800 million spacecraft (called the OSIRIS-Rex) into space to land on Bennu, bring back a sample and figure out how they might reposition the asteroid. <http://www.asteroidmission.org/> They're anticipating a cataclysmic event a lifetime away and they're preparing now.

Jesus' second coming will be a cataclysmic event too. A good event for believers but cataclysmic nonetheless. How should we prepare?

I want to give you three points that come right out of the passages we've looked at: be ready, be faithful, be holy.

Prepare for Jesus' return by being ready.

Back to Matthew 24 – Jesus has spent all of this time talking about what it will be like when He returns and then all of a sudden, around verse 40, He shifts gears and says this – I'm coming back, so be ready. You can see it at verse – 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him (Mat 24:44 NIV).

And then to drive the point home, Jesus tells these two stories to warn against not being ready – first, a homeowner who was surprised when a thief showed and second, a bunch of bridesmaids who fell asleep waiting for the groom and half of them weren't ready when the groom did show up. Jesus is saying – don't be that homeowner. Don't be those bridesmaids. Be ready.

Now that's a fairly broad principle but from the rest of what Jesus says, we can work out a more specific application – prepare for Jesus' return by being faithful.

To make that point, Jesus weaves two more parables into His speech. First He says – don't be like the servant who only works with integrity when the boss is around – when no one's watching he's drinking at his desk and abusing his fellow workers – Jesus says 'the boss is going to show up and he'll get his. Instead, be faithful – someone who is doing what they were asked to do regardless of who's watching.'

The second parable is similar – the boss gives three servants money and says – here, steward this while I'm gone. Two win praise because they faithfully stewarded what God had given them; one gets the boot because he struck the money in the ground and did nothing with it. Be faithfulness is the point, right?

God calls us to be faithful to Him as we wait for Jesus to return. So let's ask, what has God given you to steward faithfully? If you're a parent – part of waiting faithfully for Jesus is stewarding your children. If you're an employer, your employees. If you're a student, your studies. If you have money – you need to steward it faithfully. All that we have is from God and He intends that we will live in light of that, using what we need for ourselves and then sharing with others who need it. We need to be faithful.

So, be ready, be faithful – the last one is be holy.

I want to go to 2 Peter 3, starting at verse 10, because it's very clear – 2 Peter, chapter 3, starting at v 10

–

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

(Let me pause for a minute there to say – do you see how closely Peter links Jesus' second coming and our daily living? Since He will come, with catastrophic effect, what sort of people should you be -

You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him (2Pe 3:10-14 NIV).

Jesus is coming back – what sort of people should we be? Peter gives us five words – holy, godly, spotless, blameless and at peace with Him. I think we can summarize those with the first one – be holy.

Live a life now that is consistent with the life that is to come. Jesus, who gave His life to redeem us, is holy – so we do all that we can to be holy, knowing that He could come at any minute. We don't live on autopilot, we make every effort to live godly lives because we know that Jesus is coming and bringing something very good.

Did you notice, three times there, Peter says – be holy – not to earn God’s favour – but because you are looking forward to His coming. V 11 – You ought to live holy and godly live as you look forward to the day of God. V 13 we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth... v. 14 – dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace. Let the prospect of Jesus’ second coming motivate you to be holy now.

So how do we get ready for Jesus’ return? We prepare by being ready, by being faithful, and by being holy.

As we wrap up here, I think we should revisit our question and make sure we’re answering it straight on. What does Jesus’ second coming mean for my daily living?

First, it means we need to live expectantly, anticipating Jesus’ return at any time. We need to be intentional about being ready, about being holy, about faithfully stewarding all that God has given to us. I don’t know about you but I want to be a faithful servant and be ready when He comes back.

Second, Jesus’ return means that nothing in this life is the final chapter.

Maybe you have someone at work who is needlessly antagonizing you and you’re doing all you can to meet their anger with love. However it turns out, their sin will be dealt with.

We see injustice in the world all around us and sometimes it seems as though justice will never be done. It will be done.

Maybe you’re concerned about how things will shake out between D Trump and N. Korea – what they could do is nothing compared to what Jesus will do when He returns and when He does, He will usher us into an eternity of blessing – no more sorrow, no more tears. Trump can never change that.

Paul writes something in 2 Corinthians that puts everything into perspective -

7 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,  
18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.  
(2Co 4:17-18 ESV).

And when Jesus returns, we enter that glory.

Benediction

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.  
(1Th 5:23-24 NIV).