

Who Do You Say I Am? Part 5

Before we continue our sermon series, allow me to take a moment to honor a very special person in this church. I met this person about fifty years ago in the youth group here at Carbondale. If you want to know what steadfastness, faithfulness, loyalty, trustworthiness, beauty and kindness look like, just look at this person. I'm talking about my wife Paula. We were married in May of 1975 and the last week of December 1975 we became youth pastors here at Carbondale and we've never left. For the past 43 years she has been my wife and partner in loving, pastoring and serving this church. She is quiet, doesn't say much, prefers to stay out of the spotlight, but she is mighty and strong, a woman of prayer and compassion and conviction. I am a blessed man and so thankful for the gift God gave me when he allowed me to marry this lovely lady. Today happens to be her birthday. The board prepared a gift and we wanted to honor you today to show how much we love and appreciate you and all you do for the church and for the pastor! I love you. Happy birthday Paula!

We have been attempting to answer the question Jesus asked at Caesarea Philippi: Who do you say I am? We've said Jesus is the Son of the Living God, Savior and Sacrifice, Messiah, Head of the Church. This morning our answer is, **Jesus is our Coming King!**

The Christian faith is rooted in history. Not just the fact that it began at a point in time 2,000 years ago in the Middle East, but according to its teaching, God has acted in history, not just in the past 2,000 years of Christian history, but from the beginning of time. God has acted in history with the people of Israel, with the nations of the earth and he has acted in time in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. In addition, he is still acting in time to bring things to an ordered conclusion. The bible indicates we are moving toward an end, a consummation of human history. The theologian Carl F. H. Henry wrote, **"The bible throughout insists that God the Creator holds mankind eternally accountable for every thought, word and deed, and that each successive generation moves toward a final future in which the God not only of creation but also of redemption and judgment will consummate human history in the light of his divine offer of salvation."** ...Carl F. H. Henry (Quoted in James Boice -*Foundations*).

We are moving towards an end, a final future, but what does that look like? How does it all end? There are different interpretations of Scripture by different churches and scholars, however all agree with at least the Apostle's creed that affirms three things: the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.

We believe Jesus is coming again. We believe it because the bible says so. David Jeremiah in his book *What In The World Is Going On?* writes, “Scholars count 1,845 biblical references to the Second Coming, including 318 in the New Testament. His return is emphasized in no less than seventeen Old Testament books and seven out of every ten chapters in the New Testament. The Lord himself referred to His return twenty-one times. The second coming is second only to faith as the most dominant subject in the New Testament.” Jesus said he was coming back. **“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” Mark 8:38.** In John 14 Jesus said, **“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2-3** We believe Jesus is coming again because Jesus said he would.

How this will unfold is where saints and scholars disagree. This is what we believe in the Assemblies of God: we believe the bible teaches Jesus is coming again in two separate events. The first we call the rapture of the church and the second we refer to as the second coming of Christ. Let me explain.

The term rapture is not found in the New Testament, but it is the Latin version of a phrase the bible uses to describe the catching away of the saints prior to what we would call the time of tribulation that will follow on the earth. To be raptured is to be caught up to be with the Lord. Paul speaks of this in 1 Thessalonians 5 as the Lord coming like a thief in the night. We aren’t to be surprised by it, but instead we are anticipating and expecting his return for his church at any moment. We call this the blessed hope. **“...while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...” Titus 2:13**

The bible says, **“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. 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. Therefore, encourage each other with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18**

At the rapture, the dead in Christ rise first. This is not the general resurrection when all the dead are raised to stand before God at the judgment seat. That happens later. This is the resurrection of all those who are “in Christ”, referring to those who have repented and made

Jesus Savior and Lord. Then we who are alive are “caught up,” raptured to meet the Lord in the air. This happens in what Paul refers to as the “twinkling of an eye.” Faster than we can see and at that moment we are all changed. The apostle Paul writes, **“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-52**

We will be changed. In a split second the righteous dead and those of us who are saved and alive – will all be changed, given a brand new body that is imperishable, like the resurrected body of Jesus, no longer susceptible to physical limitations of decay, sickness or death. Paul said, **“Jesus...will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” Philippians 3:21**

Notice what this tells us. There is a resurrection for all those who know the Lord and have preceded us in death. There is a rapture, a catching away of his church, both those who have gone before us and those who are alive. There is a transformation, a change where we are given bodies like his resurrection body. There is a reunion, with the Lord and with all those saints of God when we are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. What a reunion – with the Lord and with the saints together, forever! Paul says to encourage one another with these words. No kidding! We are going to be with loved ones again. We are going to be with Jesus. We are going to say goodbye to the heartache and trouble of this world. That’s what happens in the rapture and that’s what we are expecting. The blessed hope. The coming of our Savior and King. But what happens after that? What about this second coming?

We believe after the rapture of the church there will be a time of tribulation unleashed on the earth. A time of God’s wrath and judgment described in the book of Revelation. The world thinks it would be better off if they got rid of church people. The truth is, when the church is caught away they’ll discover the church and the presence of God at work in the church has been a restraining force. The church is salt and light. Salt prevents decay. Without the salt and light of the church, this world will be a decaying and dark place. Wickedness and violence will be unrestrained. The bible indicates this time of tribulation will last seven years and at the end of the tribulation, the Lord will come again. This is what we refer to as His Second Coming. Let me show you the contrast between the rapture and the second coming. (Credit David Jeremiah).

Rapture

Second Coming

Saints are changed in the twinkling of an eye	No change.
Saints are caught up with Jesus to heaven.	Saints return with Jesus to earth.
Earth is not judged.	Earth judged and righteousness established.
Imminent, could come at any moment.	Follows definite signs and predictions.
Not mentioned in the Old Testament.	Predicted often in the Old Testament.
For the saints of God only.	Affects all of humanity.
Before the Tribulation period.	Concludes the Tribulation period.
Satan is not mentioned.	Satan is bound.
Jesus comes <i>for</i> His own.	Jesus comes <i>with</i> His own.
Jesus comes <i>in</i> the air.	Jesus comes <i>to</i> the earth.
Jesus comes to claim His bride, the church.	Jesus comes with His bride, the church.
Only the saints of God see Him.	Every eye shall see Him.

Taken from *What In The Word Is Going On?* Dr. David Jeremiah

At the rapture, Jesus comes for his church. At his second coming he comes to judge the nations and establish justice, establishing a literal kingdom. You see, this world matters to him. This isn't just about a spiritual reality, this is about a literal kingdom where Jesus will rule and reign as Sovereign King over the nations of the earth. We are given a glimpse of this second coming in Revelation 19. John writes, **“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. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”** Revelation 19:11-16

Jesus is coming to earth at his second coming, coming to establish justice, to make things right, to rule and reign as King of Kings. Notice John's description. He is Faithful and True. He

keeps his promise. He is true, trustworthy. This is why we know he is coming again, because he said he would and he is faithful and true.

In righteousness, with justice he judges and makes war. He came the first time as the Lamb of God to save us from our sins. He comes the second time as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, coming to judge the nations. He alone judges with true justice. He will fight the battle and win the war against all sin and wickedness and injustice with the word of truth that comes out of his mouth. All the injustice and inequity of this world he will make right at his coming.

His eyes are like blazing fire. It suggests he sees into the hearts of all. No one can hide before him because his eyes blaze away to judge even the motives and intentions of every person and every nation.

On his head are many crowns, signifying his status as the absolute sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords. No power or principality can stand against him. The robe he is wearing is dipped in blood, reminding us of his redeeming sacrifice. He is the King of Kings but he is also the Lamb that was slain to atone for our sins. It was the sacrifice of his life on the cross that secured the right, the triumph, the victory whereby he will rule and reign.

Notice who is with him. The armies of heaven. John said they too were riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Just a few verses before he tells us this refers to the church, the saints of God. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints (v9). We are coming back with him! In the little book of Jude, the writer says, **“Behold the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints.” Jude 14** Paul speaks of **“...the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” 1 Thessalonians 3:13** We are with him! He came for us in the rapture, now we are coming with him in His second coming!

Who else is in that army? The angels of heaven. Paul writes, **“This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8** Jesus said, **“When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.” Matthew 25:31**

Jesus is coming the second time as King, to rule the nations, to establish his throne. His victory is assured. He will speak the word and the enemies of God and his people will be defeated. Revelation 20 tells us at Jesus’ word an angel will seize the devil and bind him up for 1,000 years. For 1,000 years, (what we call the millennial reign, millennial being 1,000 years) without the deceiving influence of the devil, Jesus will rule and reign on this earth and we will

enjoy peace in his presence. After the 1,000 year reign comes the resurrection of all the dead and what Revelation calls the great white throne judgment. The church, those who have repented of their sins and made Jesus the Savior and Lord of their life and have served him, we've already had our sins judged. We found mercy through Jesus. We've already been changed. The righteous dead have already been resurrected and given new bodies and new life remember. We are spectators at the Great White Throne judgment, but this is the fate that awaits all who have rejected his saving mercy. The book of life will be opened and the bible says, **"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."**

Revelation 20:15. Then comes the final revelation of a new heaven and a new earth, unstained by sin or the devil, redeemed and renewed and God will dwell with us. All tears will be gone and we will be in the presence of the Lord forever.

Understand what I'm saying. Jesus is the coming king. The name written on his robe is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the undisputed Sovereign and King of the universe. It is settled and determined already, we are just waiting for the consummation of all things. The enemy is still leading a rebellion with unrepentant men and women deceived into following the devil, but the victory has already been won. The day is coming when every enemy is under Jesus' feet. At that time, at his name every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Messiah, Savior, Sovereign, King and Lord. At that time Isaiah's prophecy will come true, that the government will be upon his shoulders **"And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."** Isaiah 9:6-7

Jesus is the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So in light of all of this, what do we do? Make sure we've repented of our sins and made Jesus the Savior and Lord of our lives. Imagine knowing what you know and being left behind when Jesus returns to catch his church away! Where do you go? Who do you call? You'll know what's happened when the news breaks. "Millions disappear." You'll cry out to God knowing that a time of judgment and tribulation is coming upon the world like nothing the world has ever seen before. You don't want to miss the rapture! You want to make sure you are ready because Jesus could come today. Nothing is hindering his return!

If you know Jesus as Savior and Lord, you don't need to fear the future. Instead we are watching for and anticipating his return for his church. Paul said, **“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.”** Philippians 3:20-21 Again in 1 Thessalonians Paul writes, **“And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”** 1 Thessalonians 1:10. We aren't dreading wrath, we are anticipating his return! He is coming to rescue us!

Jesus is coming and as his people, anticipating his return, we live in the light of his coming. We aren't just looking for the Lord, we are living for the Lord. We make our lives and our days, our moments count because we know the Lord is coming. Paul writes, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”** Titus 2:11-13. Jesus is coming and we are expecting his return. Live like it! Say no to the ungodliness that is all around us. Say no to sin and say yes to Jesus and living for him because he may come today.

John writes, **“Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”** 1 John 3:2-3 Jesus is coming for his church like a groom comes for his bride. We are to keep ourselves clean, pure, unstained by sin and the world. Jesus is coming. Are you ready? If he came today, are you ready?

Jesus our King is coming. Live like it. Live in light of his coming. Spread the word.