

What Will Jesus Do upon His Return?

Vintage Jesus, week 6

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Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

— Revelation 22:20b

Scripture repeatedly states that Jesus will return to earth suddenly and visibly in His glorified, resurrected body. This is promised by Jesus (Matthew 24:44; John 14:3), two angels (Acts 1:11), Paul (1 Thessalonians 4:16), James (James 5:8), Peter (2 Peter 3:10), John (1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7; 22:20), and the author of Hebrews (9:28). We are also told that God's people should eagerly long for the return of Jesus and live lives of holiness in the meantime (Matthew 24:44; Titus 2:12–13; Revelation 22:20). Furthermore, contrary to the calculations of some people (the type Millard Erickson calls "eschatamaniacs"), we do not know when Jesus will return (Matthew 24:44; 25:13; Luke 12:40).

What Jesus will do upon His return has been the subject of some curious speculation by many notable individuals:

- **Woody Allen (comedian):** "If Jesus came back and saw what was being done in his name, he wouldn't be able to stop throwing up."
- **Thomas Carlyle (British historian, 1795–1881):** "If Jesus Christ were to come today, people would not crucify him. They would ask him to dinner, hear what he had to say, and make fun of it."
- **Mike Tyson (boxer):** "All praise is to Allah, I'll fight any man, any animal, if Jesus were here I'd fight him too."
- **Carson Daly (MTV veejay):** "Everybody stands—that's our policy. If Jesus Christ comes on the show, guess what? It's like, 'Stand right here Jesus, we got Papa Roach coming up at number six.'"
- **President Jimmy Carter:** "We should live our lives as though Christ was coming this afternoon."
- **Mark Twain:** "If Christ were here now there is one thing he would not be—a Christian."
- **Paul Boutin (contributing editor, *Wired* magazine):** "I really think that if Jesus were around today, he would have a blog."

While Scripture is not clear regarding when Jesus will return, it is clear about what He will do upon His return:

1. Jesus will judge everyone who has ever lived.

Revelation 20:11–15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had

done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

2. Jesus will punish non-Christians in hell according to their wickedness.

Romans 2:5–7 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will give to each person according to what he has done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

Revelation 14:10 "he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb."

3. Jesus will reward Christians in heaven according to their righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:9–10 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

4. Jesus and Christians will judge the angels and the world.

1 Corinthians 6:2–3 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

5. Jesus will lift the curse and its effects.

Revelation 22:3 No longer will there be any curse.

Revelation 21:4–5 "He will wipe 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." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

6. Jesus will restore creation.

Romans 8:19–21 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

2 Peter 3:12–13 . . . 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. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

7. Jesus will give Christians glorified, resurrected bodies.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 *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.*

8. Jesus' kingdom will extend over all people for all eternity.

Matthew 25:34 *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"*

Knowing the greatness that awaits us at the Second Coming of Jesus, the practical question remains, how should we live until Jesus returns? Paul wrestled with this same question in Philippians 1:20–25; he was torn between his desire to exchange this sinful, cursed, fallen world for heaven, and the work that God had given him to do on the earth that remained undone. Paul's solution was to live as a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20) while on the earth, bringing some of the joy and healing of the kingdom to the earth. In this way, Paul was not just waiting for his eternal life, but celebrating that eternal life is both a quality and duration of life that begins the moment Jesus saves us here on earth and continues forever in His kingdom. By living with our hearts and minds heavenward and our hands and feet thrust deep into the earth, we can walk with God so closely that, like Enoch, our transition from this world to the next is as simple as taking another step on a journey (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). Therefore, in the meantime, citizens of the kingdom and ambassadors of King Jesus on the earth practice for the return of Jesus through love, humility, joy, pleasure, friendship, beauty, work, rest, worship, charity, and satisfaction in God.

Next week: Why should we worship Jesus?