



(7a) APOCALYPSE: How the End Will Really Happen

In the late 1990's Philip Adams wrote a provocative article in The Weekend in Review entitled - "It's Apocalypse Now, But How?" In the article he painted a number of scenarios as to how some people think the end of the world may happen. These scenarios included: Terrorist Nuclear or Biological Attack; The Threat of Epidemics; The Enlarging Hole In The Ozone Layer; Oxygen Depletion; Asteroids; Genetic Bio-Engineering; Religious Extremists; Social Disintegration and Ethnic Cleansing; Over-Population; and Starvation Through Water Depletion. What a cheerful array of scenarios. However the one scenario which Adams left out is the very one which will bring about the end of the world as we understand it - The Apocalypse or Return of Jesus Christ. The return of Christ is mentioned 1500 times in the Bible and 318 times in 260 Chapters of the New Testament, which is one in every 25 verses of the New Testament. Whole chapters (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) and two entire books (Daniel & Revelation) are devoted to the subject. In the Old Testament for every prophecy of Christ's first coming there are 8 prophecies of his second coming. Obviously it is a critical event in earth's history.

It is a most critical event because of its twofold purpose. Firstly He is coming to gather His forever friends in order to take them home as He promised (John 14:1-3). Jesus will come back to take us to live with Him in His father's house. The father's house where God lives is in heaven. We acknowledge this every time we say the Lord's Prayer - "Our Father who is in heaven." Christ is coming to raise His friends who have died to life and then to take them and His friends who are still alive back to His father's home to live with Him (Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Secondly Christ is coming to give His friends new bodies and immortality with no more sickness and old age with its multitudinous health problems (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). The blind will see. The deaf will hear. The dumb will speak and the lame will walk. What a day that will be!

In all of this Jesus is saying, "I have not forgotten My forever friends. You are still My children and I'm coming back FOR YOU! I know your heart is broken, I know your spirit is crushed. I know your body is wracked in pain, I know you wonder, can I hope again? I know your dreams are shattered, I know your marriage is gone. You're at the end of your last rope - but hold on - I'm coming to take you home. Let not your heart be troubled, for I will come again for you. I will give you new bodies with immortality!"

But how will Jesus come to end the world as we know it? Peter makes it explosively clear that Jesus second coming will be the greatest sound and

light show the world has ever witnessed (2 Peter 3:9,10). Some individuals have gotten confused about the "thief in the night" reference of Peter here, thinking it means that Christ will return secretly and stealth fully. But verse 10 makes it abundantly clear that there will be nothing hidden or secret about the return of the King of Kings to his rightful planet usurped by the fallen rebel angel Satan! There's no tiptoeing back to earth for Jesus according to Peter. The "thief in the night" metaphor that the Bible uses is intended to describe the "unexpectedness" of Christ's return for most of this planet. Thieves are not necessarily silent when they break into a house, but they are nearly always "unexpected." It is the nature and success of thieves that they strike when you least expect them to. Christ is no thief - but alas, His unexpected return will catch many human beings totally unprepared! Peter clearly describes the entire planet in chaos at the return of Christ - no secret arrival here!

Jesus, talking to His disciples on the Mount of Olives expressed the point, taken up later by Peter, that like a thief His unexpected return will catch many human beings totally unprepared (Matthew 24:42-44)! But now take specific note of Jesus' own description of His Second Coming in Matthew 24:21-27, 30,31. No body will be sleeping through the Eleventh Scenario of Christ's return. Jesus makes it plain that His second coming will not be secret, stealthful or silent. We lived in Southwest Michigan in the USA for sometime and have never experienced thunder storms like they have there. All night long lightning and thunder crashed all around our house. Remember the story of Easter and how Jesus put in a tomb with a rolling stone, and then guarded by Roman legionnaires. Remember what happened to those bold, brave, swaggering soldiers when Jesus rose from the dead and a single angel came down from heaven and rolled away the stone to Jesus' grave that Sunday dawn (Matthew 28:4). One lone angel and an entire battalion keels over in fainting fright! Now multiply that one angel by ten thousand times ten thousand, as Daniel puts it, by millions and millions of angels in the sky and you can get a faint idea of what Matthew 24:31 will be all about!

And all the while you will notice somebody's blowing a trumpet! There's no way there's anything secret about that! This trumpet blast is very, very good news. Jesus describes all of heaven filled with the power and glory of His return with His accompanying angels, and through it all a trumpet is blasting its clarion call to earth to raise His forever friends in their graves to everlasting life!

If you've accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord and friend, this subject is about the greatest

news in all the world! - "I WILL COME AGAIN." That's the way the two angels presented the subject to the disciples of Jesus as they stood on top of the Mount of Olives watching Him disappear into the sky - "This same Jesus will come again," they reminded them (Acts 1:9-11). The very same Jesus who embraced us with His Father's love while He was here in our midst. The same Jesus who sat around our tables, and ate our meals, and shared our laughter, and wept our tears, and lived our life, and died our death, and rose for our resurrection. This same Jesus - no replacement, no substitute teacher, no substitute Savior - the very same Jesus we came to know and love when He was here amongst us. No secret coming, no stealthful return according to the angels. He will come back to us the very way He left us: Personally, publicly, plainly and powerfully. So much so that Revelation records it this way, "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7)."

"I will come again!" No wonder the Bible has reserved two little words for this one glorious promise! - "The Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13)." Hope is on the way!

What do we need to do to have that hope? The answer is given as the book of Revelation ends - Come! Come! Come! If anyone is thirsty for eternal life let them come as they are (Revelation 22:17). Why not be ready for earth's long awaited blessed hope - the return of Jesus the one who loved you so much that He gave everything, including His life for you? Why not come to Him and accept Him as your friend and Saviour? He's waiting for you (2 Peter 3:9,10).

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