

Dear listeners,

Our theme this month is **JESUS WILL RETURN! # 1 The Promise of His Return**

To start off with I have this question: can you imagine the kind of world our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came to when He left his heavenly home the first time? How godless it was everywhere. With the exception of some true believers in Israel and some among the Jewish settlements around the Mediterranean Sea, the rest of the world was godless. There was no true worship of the only true God to be found anywhere, and certainly no expectation of a Saviour to save the world. In fact, man would ask, to save the world from what?! Even among the people of Israel there were very few who had a proper expectation of the coming of the promised Messiah. You could just about count them on the fingers of one hand in the days the Lord Jesus walked on this earth: Zacharias, Elisabeth, Joseph, Mary, Simeon, Anna, to name a few of them. No wonder that the apostle John had to write in the first chapter of his gospel: *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*(vs. 10,11).

Can you imagine such a world, a world of global godlessness, i.e., a world without God, a world as described by the apostle Paul in Romans 1. A world where *they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped the creature and served created things rather than the Creator* (vs25). As punishment God gave both men and women *over to shameful lusts. We read how Paul continues to describe the world which he had to enter as an apostle of Christ, as a missionary of the gospel - every nation under the sun, with the relative exception of Israel, had become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. Throughout the earth people were full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless . . .*(vs29-30)”

That, listeners, was the kind of world our Lord and Saviour came to at his first coming to this earth. Can you imagine such a world, such a godless world? Indeed, we can, because in the last few centuries, and specifically in the last hundred years the world has turned into exactly such a kind of world, a philosophy of living, the pursuit of a lifestyle, as described by the apostle Paul, but then now a philosophy of living an ungodly lifestyle, as chosen **after** having heard the gospel, after an age in which the gospel was preached far and wide, after an age in which it has reached practically every nation, tribe, people and language. How is this our present world not be filled with all the abhorrent lifestyles as mentioned by Paul, especially in this, our Western world? A world then, because of its world-wide apostasy, because of its deliberate rejection of the only Saviour given by God, increasingly given over to nothing but vain philosophy, dead

theology, and false prophecy. In short, surrendered to a death culture the likes the history of man has never seen.

No wonder that those who teach history – church history, that is – speak of our era as the Post-Christian era, an era in which the Christian faith is driven into a corner, is being banished from the land.

Well, how great then to know that this era of apostasy, of false prophecy, of dead theology – an age so similar to the one our Saviour came to the first time – will come to an end, to a definite end. No, it will not end in the same way as it did in Paul's days, by the preaching of the gospel of Christ, far and wide, across the globe, but will come to an end by a just judgments of God, i.e., at the second and final coming of our Saviour, the very theme and topic of this month's "Voice of the Church" broadcast: the Return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pursue this topic on our "future glory" based on Romans 8:18ff, the Scripture passage we have just read. This future glory, as you know, will become a reality at the return of our Saviour, with his Second coming. This topic deals with our Christian hope and expectation, thus, with matters of the greatest interest to us, Christians, especially in view of the direction this, our world, is going. It leaves the strong impression that the end is near, is just about upon us, leaves the impression that our Lord and Saviour is about to return, an impression which, as we will see in the next few weeks, is clearly mentioned time and again in the Holy Scriptures.

First of all then, **The Promise of His Return**

Throughout the Bible there is spoken of our Saviour's second coming, of his promised return to inaugurate a new heaven and a new earth. Understandably the Old Testament as a whole focuses more on the promise of his first coming, his coming in our flesh. Still, there are a number of O.T. Scripture passages that already speak of the time of His second coming, the time of the resurrection of our body, the time that *in my flesh I will see God* as Job put it. For the Lord *will not abandon me to the grave* the Psalmist cries out in Ps. 16. We also think of Ezekiel 37, of that telling parable about **the Valley of Dry Bones**, which gave that promising revelation, manifestation of the power of the Lord our God to turn dead dry bones into living beings. And what about the prophecies of Isaiah! Even though they contain those memorable passages of the promise of our Saviour's *first* coming, there are nevertheless also a number of them that speak of the promise, of the time of his *second* coming. *Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. It will be something so great that the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind* (Is. 65:17), which expression already reminds of our Romans 8:18, that *our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us*. Thanks then to the **Branch of Jesse**, the Son of David, thanks to our Saviour's righteousness and faithfulness, we have that promising picture, the sure promise of a world of perfect love and peace, a world where *the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down*

with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them (Is.11:5,6).

But be it then that this promise of our Saviour's second and final coming was still somewhat obscure, hidden, in the Old Testament, this promise really comes to its own in the New. We think of those telling words spoken by the angels of God to the disciples immediately following our Saviour's ascension, at his departure from this earth: *This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11).*

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We think of what the Lord Jesus himself has said on his Return, on his coming back from heaven: In his talks with his disciples, in his confrontations with the Scribes, the Pharisees and Sadducees, with the leaders in his day, as well as in his many speeches and parables, and most notably in that so-called eschatological discourse, his address on **the last things** as recorded for us in Mt.24 and 25.

But of all his words how striking and most comforting are those found in John 14:1-3. It certainly was to his disciples. *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 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.* Those memorable words of our Saviour were spoken during the last Passover. They were addressed to his own, to his disciples, who had become most sorrowful on hearing that their Lord was about to suffer and die, was about to leave them. And that's how we have with a view to his departure back to heaven in this and the following chapters a reference to his replacement, to the second comforter, God the Holy Spirit.

Well, dear listeners that's where we will leave it for now. We have seen how the Bible in many and wondrous ways speaks of the promise of our Saviour's return from heaven, and it is this promise which constitutes our hope and expectation, a hope and expectation which ought to make us cry out from day to day: *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20).*

The Bible calls for an urgent return to the Gospel: it urges all of us to a life of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, by grace through faith. Yes, without Him in our daily lives we have no hope, no comfort! Without this there will be no eternal life awaiting us after Jesus returns for the last time. It is our mandate to broadcast this truth to our listeners far and near. Be assured that our father in heaven will hear the prayers of those who truly seek Him. Only then will you have peace in your lives and only then will you have a future after this world and all its glory has passed away. An eternal future awaits all those who have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be all honour and glory - now and forever... thank you for listening.

