

Dear listeners,

In the last three broadcasts we spoke about **The promise of His Return, The Longing for His Return, and The Signs of His Return.** In this last broadcast of the month we want to continue to speak about those **Signs** of our Saviour's return, and want to conclude with some closing remarks on what will take place on the actual **Day of His Return.**

Another sign Scripture speaks about is the appearance of **the Antichrist.** 2 Thessalonians speaks about the coming of the Man of Lawlessness. During the time of apostasy, during the time of that wholesale rejection of the truth as revealed in God's infallible Word, this lawless one will come on the scene and lead the apostate, the unbelieving masses in their rejection of the Word, the Law of God, and will also lead them against the Christians, the true believers. He will be **permitted** to come on the scene, but not before the gospel has reached every nation. To that end he will be **restrained** by God. After that he will indeed be **allowed** to do his satanic worst, be it for a very short time. He will be allowed to do his worst, as an instrument in the hand of Satan, yes, but also as a winnow in the hand of God to sift out the true believers from the unbelievers, the righteous from the unrighteous. He will draw a sharp demarcation line between them.

There is the suggestion made that this **lawless man** consists of many persons, 2 Thessalonians, however, leaves the strong impression that it is one definite person living at the end-time, a man in whom is embodied the sum total of man's wickedness. He will not only oppose Christ, but present himself as his replacement, a man who assumes the honour and glory which is due to Christ Jesus alone. Dear listeners, in view then of the power unleashed by this Antichrist how great to know that it is our Saviour Jesus Christ who has the last word. He will overthrow this man of lawlessness, this global terror among man, *with the breath of his mouth and destroy (him) by the splendour of his coming* (2 Thess.2:8).

Then along with those main signs there are also what we may call **the Concurrent Signs.** In Matthew 24 (our Saviour's discourse on the last things) there is also mention of wars and rumors of wars, of earthquakes and famines, and the rise of many false prophets. Even though they were going to precede and would be signs to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, they were also to be signs of the end-times, especially the appearance of many false Christs and prophets. Indeed, during the course of history there have been many wars and many earthquakes. One author counted as many as 300 wars in the last 300 years in Europe alone, and another counted no less than 7000 earthquakes in the nineteenth century alone. How then can they be considered sure signs of our Saviour's return? Now to be sure, we will never know which wars, which earthquakes would be the last ones and thus be immediate signs of his coming. Even so, there is that word of our Saviour: *when you see **all** these things, you know that it is near, right at the door* (Mt 24:33). In other words, when all those calamities begin to accumulate, including the

appearance of those many false Christs, those manly false prophets, when they come at us all at once, more extensively and with more intensity than ever before, we will know that the time of our Saviour's return is close at hand.

And this then brings us to the culmination, the conclusion of our Christian hope and expectation: **The actual Day of our Saviour's Return.** And then, finally, there will be our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. *Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'* At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky ..(Mt. 24:29,30). And what a sign, what a sight that will be! Our Saviour's royal, majestic appearance in the sky will itself be the sign of the things that are to take place on this great and glorious day, and which will follow one another in rapid succession. He is descending while his people quickly ascend up to him, to meet Him in the air. And that's how everyone *will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory* (Mt.24:30). Truly, it will be a sudden visible self-manifestation. His coming will be very sudden and yet, still most surprising. Indeed, *like a thief in the night* (1Thess.5:2) And what will be the purpose be of his coming? To gather all his own to Himself, to overthrow the man of lawlessness; to execute justice over all his and our enemies; to judge the living and the dead, and to make all things new.

And what else will take place on that day? There will be first of all **the Resurrection.** The Lord Jesus said, *all who are in their grave will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned* (Jn.5:28,29). Again, what a sight to behold, to see all those who at one time lived on earth, to have them rise up from the dead: the martyrs, those fed to the lions, those burned on the stake, those beheaded on the scaffold. Not one of them got lost, not one of them is missing: their bodies preserved like a seed in the soil (1Cor.15:42-44), they are now outfitted by God with a new body, a glorified body, and that *in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet* (1Cor.15:52). That's how everyone will stand there each with his own body, each with his own identity. No, not stand there, but immediately moving upward, to meet their Lord and Saviour in the air.

This glorious happening is often called **the Rapture.** Perhaps, your remember that the members of the church at Thessalonica wondered what would happen to the believers who died., those whose bodies were put in the grave. Paul, then, came to assure them that those who have fallen "asleep" the Lord Jesus would bring back with Him at his return. He will bring their souls from heaven, so that they may be quickly united with their respective bodies. Then the believers still living, who have survived the apostasy, false prophecy, the tribulation, and the Antichrist, *will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air* (1Thess.4:17). And that's how the Lord will come **with** his saints and **for** his saints, for their entire persons (soul and body). This Rapture will be public and it will be **audible:** The Lord *will come down from*

*heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God . . . (1Thess.4:16). (No wonder that someone has called this “the noisiest verse in the Bible.”)*

And then there will be **the Final Judgment**. It will take place immediately following Christ’s second coming and the resurrection of the dead. *When the Son of Man comes in his glory . . . all the nations will be gathered before him (Mt.25:31,32). For we must all appear, Paul says, before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2Cor.5:10).*

To be sure, the Standard that will be used is the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and, therefore, all who believe and acknowledge through faith that He is their righteousness, satisfaction and holiness before God will be received in glory, despite all the sins committed while in the body. For, indeed, *salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).*

Well, dear listeners, this brings me to the conclusion of my presentation on the Christian’s hope and expectation: the glorious Return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I hope it has been edifying. May the overall result be a greater awareness of the time in which we live: the end times – the **very end times!** May it also encourage us to take the present physical and mental persecution in stride. May the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ grant that we more consciously and conscientiously, with increasing zeal and dedication, and with joyful expectation keep waiting and looking for our blessed hope – *the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself to us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good (Titus 2:13,14).* For hasn’t it become clear again that the coming return of our Lord and Saviour will be so glorious that not one of Christ’s followers will want to miss out on it. May then our hope and expectation be born by a deep-felt gratitude and make us cry out with all believers everywhere, *Amen! Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus!*

*What about you my dear listeners? In each one of our meditations this month we have shown that 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. What is your response to this message? It is our mandate to broadcast the truth of the Bible to our listeners, far and near. 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.*