

# The Second Coming of Christ

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of believing in the personal nature of Christ's second coming and the hope it brings to believers.*

**Duration:** 41:21

**Scripture:** John 14:1-3, Hebrews 9:26-28

**Topics:** "Second Coming"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the uncertainty and mystery surrounding the return of Jesus Christ. They emphasize that the details of when and how Jesus will come again are not important, but rather the focus should be on the anticipation and joy of his return. The speaker encourages listeners to trust in God's plan and not get caught up in trying to understand every aspect of biblical prophecy. They emphasize the importance of maintaining a close relationship with God and eagerly awaiting the day when Jesus will come for his followers.

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## Transcript

Fourteenth chapter is drawn, drawn the fourteenth chapter, first three verses. Let not your heart be troubled, for ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.

If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.

And receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Now it comes to pass in the course of my sermons on the gospel according to John, that I am to deal with Jesus' word, I will come again. And receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

Now it will be necessary for me to, before I come to that passage itself, to lay down a little background of truth concerning the coming of our Savior, and point out that the doctrine of Christ's return has always been a part of the Christian message. It has provided a kind of background against which the Gospels were written, as well as the Epistles. Jesus, our Lord, wove the promise of his return into his teachings while he was among us.

And when he had gone, the apostles took up where he had left off, and Paul in his teachings, and John and Peter and Hugh, united to weave that same golden thread of hope into their epistles. And then when

we come to the book of Revelation, what is it? It is a whole book devoted to the doctrine of Christ's return. And that hope was never lost to the Church.

It was always held that there was coming a time when the one who had been here would return. Sometimes the teaching was very general, and even vague at other times. But it was never lost, and Christian literature has preserved it through the centuries.

You will find it occurring in the hymns of the Church, the Latin hymns, the Greek hymns, and later the German and the English hymns. You will find it in the sermons of the great down-to-the-Church fathers. You will find it in the letters which they wrote each other.

You will find it recurring here and there in the great devotional classics from Augustine's *Compassion on down to the latest* which might have been written. Now, it was not much emphasized the truth of our Lord's return. During the time of the Reformers, they had other things which they had to deal with.

And so they emphasized certain doctrines concerning justification by faith, and the authority of the scriptures, and all that. And the doctrine of Christ's return to the earth, while it was there, as a kind of unspoken part of the message, it was not particularly emphasized. And so it was in the Wesleyan Revival.

The Wesleyan Revival dealt with the perfection of the human soul, and with the profounder things of the doctrines of the Church. Not profounder than the Second Coming, but I mean the more interior things. And even during the Great Awakening in this country, in New England and under Phineas, you will find that their teaching does not particularly emphasize the coming of Christ, though it was there as an assumed fact.

As though I were talking about other things and did not teach the doctrine of gravitation, but I took here for granted the truth of gravitation. Otherwise, nothing else would hold together. Now, about a century ago, there came a widespread revival of interest in the study of prophecy, and a new emphasis on Christ's Millennial reign on the earth, and a renewed study of the Book of Daniel and of Revelation.

And there arose about that time and later, certainly a lot of it much later, certain detailed interpretations of the Second Coming of Christ. For instance, the doctrine that Christ was coming back again twice. That he was coming for his Church, and then a matter of seven years later, he was coming with his Church.

And the doctrine concerning the restoration of the Roman Empire, and the return of the Jews to Palestine, and the tribulation period which was to break upon the world which our Lord taught us to come. These things received a great deal of emphasis, and they received, I am afraid, emphasis and detail far beyond that which was found in the Scriptures. And then, along with this, there arose about a hundred years ago also, that which we call modernism.

That is, it was compounded of three things, or it arose out of three things, rationalism, science, and higher criticism. And you know what rationalism is. It was the doctrines of the Rousseau and Voltaire and Paine and the rest of them about that time, that the human reason was sufficient.

That it was big enough that we didn't have to have a god of revelation, we didn't have to have inspired scriptures, but man's reasoning power was sufficient for himself. And then came science with its amazing discoveries. Then came higher criticism.

Attaching the word of God has been just one more boot, subject to criticism the same as any other literary work. And so we had what is now called liberalism or modernism. And in order to combat that, there arose certain strong men around the turn of the century.

They were simply evangelicals. They were simply the traditional believers in the doctrines of the Scriptures. But they got themselves called fundamentalists, because they wrote a bunch of books called the Fundamentals, dealing with the great truths of the Bible that could not be gainsaid.

The great doctrines that must stand like the God and the Trinity and the creation and the deity of Jesus and the bodily resurrection of Christ and the justification by faith and the fact of sin and the fall, and these great fundamentals. So they were called the fundamentalists. And they were nobody else, only evangelicals on the warpath, that's all.

They were just those who were evangelicals dated back to Pentecost, only they were now challenged, and they had to fight, and they did. And they did a noble job of it, and for them we need this hour to thank our God that a strong line was drawn, a sharp line of demarcation between those who believed in the ascendancy of human reason, the preeminence of the human mind, and those who believed, on the other hand, that the human mind was not sufficient, that God had to make a revelation, and that Bible was the revelation. A dividing line was drawn between those who held this Bible to be the inherent word of God and those who held the Bible to be a good book full of good ideas but subject to faults and flaws the same as any other book.

Now here was a strange thing. That with the rise of what we now call fundamentalism, there came also, paralleling it, what other relation there might have been, I'm not for the moment sure, but paralleling it, there came this renewed interest in prophecy, in Daniel, in revelation. And the great fundamentalists, the great warriors who stood for the Bible against modernism and higher criticism, were also among those who were the great prophetic students.

And so, millenarianism, the doctrine that Christ was to come and set up his reign on the earth, and fundamentalism came married. So that the thousands of people, and in the public mind generally, the fundamentalists is one who, among other things, believes that Christ is coming again to set up his millennial reign. And along with that doctrine of his coming to set up his millennial reign, there was also, there went also, all the details that have been worked out, and the many details that have been added.

So we have now, in our minds, the idea that pre-millenarianism, with its doctrine of the Antichrist and the tribulation, and the Church escaping the tribulation, and the seventeenth year of Daniel, and the Schofield interpretation of all prophetic events, that they, in fundamentalism, run parallel and hand-in-hand, and that they are Siamese twins, and if one goes, the other must go. And thus teaching men forgot such men as Luther, they've forgotten Alanson, they've forgotten Augustine, and Bernard, they've forgotten Knox, and Wesley, and Fletcher, they've forgotten Finney, and Jonathan Edwards, they've forgotten all about them. For while they believed, as I state, they believed that Christ would come to the earth another time.

They did not go along with all the details that you and I are now supposed to go along with. But they were believers in the return of Christ. All great Christians, I insist, have been believers in the return of Christ.

And then came the abuse of promise. About the First World War, and going on to the Second World War, and dying a terrible death in the Second World War, there was a revival of, or a sudden upscreening of, prophetic teaching. With their charts and their maps, adding the details, searching the newspapers and

times magazines and the rest, looking for details, working it out to a point where they knew more about it than the prophets themselves, and using the stunning wonder of it, and the tabloid fireworks of the end of all things and the coming of Christ, to draw crowds, make money, and gain prominence.

And of course the normal reaction to all that was that the conservative and honest people turned away from it. And the result is now the teaching of Christ's return has been greatly neglected in the last ten years. Greatly neglected.

Christ is coming again. He said, I will come again. And he meant that we should believe that he would come again, that he would make two trips to the earth, one to die and one to take his people away.

But men have been wiser than the prophets and the apostles and the twenty-four elders. And the result was, of course, that there has been a crisis turning away from it all. We have now post-tribs and pre-tribs and pre-millennialists and all-millennialists.

Now brethren, what shall we do with the doctrine of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why, do that what you do with everything that's in the Bible, believe it. Believe what the Bible says and challenge every man's right to add anything to what the Bible says, or take anything away. That the Messiah must come twice to the earth is the teaching of the whole Bible.

You will find it taught in the Psalms, you will find it taught in the Prophets. You will find it taught by our Lord himself. You will find it taught through the epistles and finally in the book of Revelation, and suggested in the book of Acts.

To deny that Christ our Lord shall come and set his holy feet once more upon this floating ball that we call the earth is to deny the Bible itself. If you were to go to the scriptures and cut out all the parts of them that teach that he will come to the earth, again you would have to cut out such an alarming amount of scriptures that you would have a very thin Bible left indeed. I say it's the teaching of the whole Bible that he should come to the earth twice.

That he should come once as a priest to die, and once as a king, and another time as a king to reign. I think it is summed up very beautifully in three verses in Hebrew. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.

But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin to the sacrifice of himself. Now there is one appearance to put away sin to the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die and after that to judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.

And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin offering unto salvation. The first time it was the sin offering that he brought. The second time it is without sin offering and unto ultimate salvation.

Now throughout the New Testament, particularly in the writings of the apostles, this hope of our Lord's return to us again is both a warning and a comfort. Our Lord used it. Take heed, beware, watch.

Those are the warnings. Take heed and beware and watch. But the consolations are found in such phrases as wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Now I'm a believer in the second coming of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the golden thread that's woven through all of my preaching and all of my hope and all of my prayer and all of my belief about the nations and the Jews and the Church and the future. But there has been grave error.

I do not mean so much error of doctrine as error of emphasis. It is heard in such familiar phrases as the God's clock of prophecy. You've heard of that.

Suppose the clock of prophecy was ticking away and just as your clock is sitting on your dresser now, ticking away the clock that'll get you out of bed tomorrow morning. Ticking away there, but you're here at church. Nobody's around there.

Sitting there all by itself, ticking away. So by the use of such phrases we have inadvertently given away our mental concept of the doctrine of Christ's coming. He comes when the alarm goes off.

He comes at the time when the clock hands pass around. Now that's all true, I suppose, but it's a mighty bad emphasis. And then we have another phrase, the prophetic program.

You've heard that. That's French word, mispronounced. Most men swallow the tail end of it and call it program.

And they talk about God's prophetic program. And we feel that it's an agenda, that God has a long agenda. And that finally one item on the agenda will be the coming of the Lord Jesus.

And then we have another phrase, the schedule of prophetic events. And then we have the phrase of signs of the end. Now, all those things are biblical, I suppose, but because they lay the emphasis upon schedule and agenda and events, and fail to lay it upon the person of the one who is coming, the teaching has often done as much harm as it has good.

Add to this our newspaper clippings, now grown yellow. Some of them furtively burnt to escape our embarrassment or to get us out of an embarrassing position. And charts and maps and bits of selected history misunderstood.

And wonders and signs and strange things found in the text. Chariots shall be full of flaming fire, and their rungs jostle themselves in the streets. Automobile accidents, Fourth of July.

They shall fly as doves to their windows, their flames in the sky. You see, my brethren, the second coming of Christ has been objectified. It has been made external.

It has been put on the outside. It has been made into an agenda of events and has been robbed of its personal love content. And the bridegroom has been lost in this social event, getting ready for the wedding.

Instead of the bridegroom of our souls, he is someone who has wound up a cloth. He is someone who has worked out an agenda. He is somebody who has printed a schedule.

He is someone who has marked certain signs. And so we bore into the signs and watched the times and read the papers and scanned carefully time magazines and listened to the news commentators and cut out bits of information from various parts of the world and tried to put the crossword, not crossword, but jigsaw puzzle together. And all the time the bridegroom has been lost.

My father used to tell the story of a forgetful old farmer. He had a mare named Mabel. And he, I think it was Mabel, it wasn't, I'll call her Mabel, and he had her shoes, they were shod, everyone's going to lie to you, and he put shoes on her.

So one day he walked in, knife and sweat off his brow, threw four shoes down. He said, Ed, I want you to put these on her and I've got some shopping to do tomorrow and when I come back I'll pick her up. He said, you want me to shoe your horse? Yes.

Where is she? Well, I plumb forgot to bring her. He brought the shoes and forgot the horse. And it's no sillier than the bride who to be, who in her eagerness to have everything arranged, flowers in the right place, candles in the right place, walk with certain steps, certain times to use, certain dress she wears, everything arranged but one thing, no bridegroom.

Everything arranged but one thing. Don't look embarrassed, any of you ladies, but that could happen. Arrange everything but forget the chief or maybe second to the chief event, the bridegroom.

And that's what we've done in prophetic teaching. I've heard it from the time I was a tiny boy, a young fellow, the time I was convergent, and I have heard more teaching on more details and have seen the faith of Jesus Christ a few times in Saul, and I want to admit Jesus said, I will come again and take you to me that you may be with me. There you have it, my brethren.

Of course there are details, of course there are prophetic signs, of course he told us a lot of things, and he even said, look up for your redemption for last night. But all the time he was emphasizing one thing, I'm coming, I will come again. Not the time clock will tick off, not as we get down to the agenda, but I will come again.

I say we've theologized it and objectivized it and put it on the outside and made an event, a schedule out of it. Forgot that the Lord never thought of it like that at all. The Lord thought about his personal event, the marriage, the wedding, he coming for his bride, and his bride being with him forever.

And we and I, we shall dwell together. That was the beauty and wonder of the doctrine of the second coming, and that's what our Lord said here, let not your heart be troubled, I will come again and receive you unto myself in order that where I am, there you may be also. Just as the Jews made the error of expecting the Messiah to come and put down their enemy.

And when he came, he didn't do it, and they crucified him. So the Church has made the mistake of expecting or looking to that element in the Lord's second coming, which means the overthrow of evil nations. He'll do that.

The triumph over his enemies, he'll do that. The fulfillment of all the prophetic scriptures, he'll do that. But that's not the chief reason for his coming.

Let not your heart be troubled, I will come again, and I will receive you unto myself that we can be together forever. Where I am, there you may be. But Master, Master, how can it be I go to prepare a place for you? I'm preparing a place so that we can be together.

Oh, my brethren, to dwell in the presence of the blessings of God, this is the hope of the coming season. We don't go to Russia and think out from there. We don't go to Rome and think out from there.

We don't even go to Jerusalem and think out from there. We go to our Father's house and think out from there. It is from the standpoint of the Father's house in the bright room that we think of the second coming of Christ.

It's easy to be mistaken on these tales, perfectly easy. They were wrong about Mussolini being Antichrist. They were wrong about certain other leaders, anti-God leaders in history being Antichrist.

But they're not wrong if they expect Jesus to come back for them, to take them to be with him so they can be together forever. They're always right there. You can be wrong on the schedule.

You can be wrong on what time it is on the clock. I got up the other morning. I didn't even tell them what time it is.

But I got up the other morning and turned off the alarm, went downstairs, and blessed my soul and body. I was one hour up early. One hour early, I had looked wrong at the clock.

And it's perfectly possible to look wrong at your clock, to have it wrong on hours. But you're right when you're expecting him to come. You're right when you say, I believe he's coming.

You believe he'll come. But do you line up here, or do you line up here? You smile and say, I line up with those who look for his coming. I line up with those who believe that the Messiah who was here once will come again and receive us unto himself.

And it'll be his job to uphold the scripture, not mine. It'll be his job to put down Antichrist, not mine. It'll be his job to vindicate the Jews, not mine.

It'll be his job to sit upon the throne and call all nations before him and separate the sheep from the goats, not mine. The queen only looks up to her king and sits quiet. He does it.

It's he that signs the great papers of state. He that uses the royal seal. He before whom the great lords must come.

He sits quiet. In England it's different now. The queen is the queen.

Granted that the king is the man, the king, and the king has the bride, and that's the way it is in the scriptures. It isn't the business of the bride to work out all these details. Look upon them with wonder.

Look up to God and say, I'm not sure about this 24th of Matthew. I'm not clear about that 9th chapter of Daniel. Lord, I'm not quite clear.

The only humble, wise thing to do is to say, Lord, I'll teach all and know, and I'll believe all that is discovered here. But the big thing for me is, I would say, I will come to you, and you and I will be together. See the vision of the three persons, to behold that which is the nectar, the sweet wine of the angels, the fruit of the blessed, the manna of heaven, to look upon the three persons.

Behold the blessed God in the blissful home of the blessed. They all thought, those old Bible writers, that to look upon God was the summum bonum to which all other things pointed. Abraham saw my day and was glad, and dwelt in tents and refused to build a city, for he caught a fleeting glimpse of the city that had foundations, wherein dwelt God in celestial beauty.

Moses, who looked upon God and came down out of the mountain with a halo upon it, and a shine on his face. And David, who said to dwell in the house of the Lord, and to behold him and see him was the highest good he could think about. Whom have I on earth but thee, and whom in heaven but thee? Isaiah saw the king in his beauty in a land that was very far off, and Paul often struggled and labored and bore the scars of his holy warfare.

He said, I'm in a strait between two. I don't know whether it would be better for me to stay or better to go, because to be with the Lord is far better, but I have little time to be here yet. So I'll stay and fight me dead until the Lord says it's enough.

And then he said, I've finished my course, I have fought my fight, and I have given my testimony. So they all thought that it would be a typical vision, the days of the soul on the cross, for the end of life to begin, the end of it all. That for which man was created, that for which he ever came into the world in the first place.

The hymn writers, let Bernard speak for all the hymn writers, all that army of intoxicated souls, that army of God-inebriated men and women who looked on God and wept for very joy. Jesus, the very thought of thee, with sweetness filled my breath, but sweeter far thy face to see, and in thy sight be rest. Let Bernard speak for all of them.

Let him speak for Tim's and Dorothy's. Let him speak for Montgomery and Sennett, and Medley, and Wesley, and Spurgeon. Let him speak for the Latin hymn writers, and the Greek hymn writers, and the great German hymn writers with the low unpronounceable names, mouth-filling gorgeous names they have.

Now we have it in plain English. Thank God for us who can't read German. Let him speak for them.

Jesus, the very thought of thee. How sweet is the thought of Jesus while we're here. Beautiful indeed.

Beautiful to look at the picture of your loved ones. Beautiful to think of thoughts of your loved ones. But how much more wonderful to look at the face of your loved one in his present breath.

Well, my brethren, here is the test that decides so very much. Is the coming of Christ a schedule? Is it an agenda? Is it a list of events following each other in pyrotechnical wonders? All that. All that.

But that's incidental to you. Here's a bride who lived three months with her husband, and then he went overseas. She's written him every day.

Every day and sometimes twice. Sending snapshots and videos. Kept up every possible contact she could with him.

And then the day comes when he's coming home. He's flying in from LaGuardia Field. He knows his flight number.

And what kind of plane he'll be on. He'll stand out on the open space where she can see him. And wait.

He's a little crowd of friends around him. And suddenly, thrown over the loudspeaker, flight numbers going cold to New York City, Friday, December 7th. Screaming.

I suppose he's screaming, very likely. What drama at a time like that. Oh, him, him.

Pretty soon, the great old plane gets down. Gets bigger and bigger and bigger and threatens to crash down on 6th Avenue. He's in the middle of the scene.

Young fellow with his marvelous reflection. Sets her down. Calm.

Moves. He pushes her soft and he turns. Flaps her.

Tugs her. Lifts her away up. And stops.

And he comes back. Waving as he comes. And she cries and cries and cries.

She's been waiting for this so long. Now he comes and she can't do anything but cry and cry and cry. What kind of plane was he in, ladies? I don't know.

What did it look like up there coming down? I don't know. Who else was on the plane? I don't know. What did the steward look like? I don't know.

What did the pilot look like? I don't know. They all came down the steps, but I didn't see one of them. Three years had gone.

Three years. And she stood up at the altar and promised to love. So that's the separation she meant.

Ah, brothers. All the details you need to somebody else. You've been listening on your shortwave that I have downtown.

You might have heard that same groaning voice, but I wonder sometimes how they can never be understood. Over a thousand, a thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four hundred, something. There, there, there, there.

Wiring it in or what, or radioing it in. What does she care about that? What does she care about whether flaps are down or not? What does she care about flaps? What does she care about landing gear? She doesn't know a thing about that. All she knows is that for which she's lived for three years is now there.

Brethren, for years, the evangelical teachers have spent their time measuring the tails of the planes and the spread of the wing and drawing pictures of the windows of the planes and holding the ass of the pilot and they've got everybody but the bridegroom. Forgetting that that's the only reason they're interested in us at all. Why should you be interested in any coming that wasn't a coming of Jesus? If there was any other coming, what do you care? You might have a curiosity if Abraham was to come back, but I wouldn't go too far to see Abraham.

You'll see him one of these times, but he's better looking than he is now. You'll go with Gabriel, you'll go with all the rest of them. The big thing isn't the schedule, the program, the signs, the event.

The big thing is, I will come with him and receive you unto myself so that we can be together. We can be together. He's separated from his bride now.

He's separated. He was down here a little while, but he's been separated from her quite a while. He's coming back.

I tell you, this is the emphasis that separates the men from the boys and the true from the false and the real from the artificial, the sons of God and the sons of man. This is his coming again, not the kingdom.

There's nothing about the kingdom unless he comes.

The old man of God said this, Ten thousand times, ten thousand, in sparkling raiment bright, the armies of the ransomed came strong up this beach of life, and since all had finished their fight with death and pain, they opened wide their golden gates and let the victors in. But righteous hallelujah fills all the earth and sky, but a ringing of a thousand hearts beseeched the triumphant man. O day for which creation and all its tribes were made, O joy, for all its form and glory, renew thy great salvation, thou land for sinners slain.

Fill up the role of thine election, take thy power and reign. Appear, desire of nations, thine exiles long for home. O in the heavens, thy promised land, O brethren, there is what separates the men from the boys ye saw from Jesus, separates Demas from an apostle, separates worldly wise men from the meek and gentle saints who watch to pray in expectation of the bridegroom's return.

With everything in me, I believe he's coming. I will come again. And I feel like saying, Oh, please, Lord, don't send Jemima, don't send Moses, don't send David, don't even send him with me, or don't send Abraham, don't send Paul, don't send John, come thyself, Lord, come to me.

Come thyself, Lord. Ah, brethren, are you ready, sir? Are you ready for it? Where will you appear? Oh, you shall come. Where will you appear, sir? Where will you appear, you worldly ones? You say, I've got to be groomed like the other women of my time.

You've got to be groomed like the other women of your time. You know where they learn that grooming? From the whores of Hollywood and the prostitutes of Broadway. A lot of our women right now, they'd leave this church if we put a rule down that they had to dress modestly.

They'd leave it to walk out on us. This teaching separates the real from the false, the men from the boys, the holy from the unholy, the once-born from the twice-born. Oh, you worldly ones, where will you turn when you appear? You deceitful, you professional fools, where will you run when you come? Take these people away, the blood-loving, the deceitful, more important than life.

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