

The Lord's Return

by Charles Anderson

The sermon explores the significance of the Lord's return, the difference between the rapture and the revelation, and the signs that indicate we may be close to the tribulation period.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:24, Proverbs 27:17, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 5:13, Matthew 6:33, John 14:2, 1 Corinthians 11:26

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a substitute teacher who asked a question about the walls of Jericho and a student confidently volunteered to knock them down. The speaker then transitions to discussing signs that indicate the nearness of the tribulation period. He recommends a book by Charles Colson called 'Against the Night' which highlights the corruption and potential collapse of Western civilization. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of paying attention to what is happening in Israel, as it relates to God's covenant people. Additionally, the speaker mentions the increasing ignorance of the word of God in general society as a preparation for the great tribulation period.

Transcript

I paid another nostalgic visit to the Philippine Islands, and I recall one early morning standing on the edge of Manila Bay and looking out at the very famous, if you just discern it in the dimness of the early morning, the very famous Rock of Corregidor. And in that moment, a thousand memories flooded through my mind. I thought of that horrible episode in our American history when the Japanese, having swept down to that point, down to the city of Manila and taken it, had driven our forces out until all that was left was the military contingents that were on the Rock of Corregidor.

They were then under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur, and for days and days, the Japanese selected that rock as the bullseye. And from the mainland, they pounded it with heavy artillery. They pounded it with bombs from the because our air force was totally annihilated.

We couldn't reply. We had hardly anything to respond, save a few pathetic planes. We held out against the Japanese assault until eventually hunger began to strike our men, and worse than hunger, disease began to afflict the soldiers there on the island.

And one night, there came a message from the commander-in-chief of the military forces of America that General Douglas MacArthur was to leave the island of Corregidor and go down to Australia in order to map out a strategy to halt the Japanese assault down through the southern Pacific, and maybe be able to

turn the tide. I understand that the general at first was inclined to refuse that command and stay rather with his men, but because it was an order from the commander-in-chief, he eventually had to go. And so one night, the general, his wife and son, and a small contingent of men set out on a boat, small boat, to be met by a submarine out in the waters beyond Corregidor.

And boarding the submarine, they were taken down to Australia to fight another day. And then you may remember, the island was put in charge of a lesser man, General Jonathan Wainwright. I'm not certain that he was a general at that time, but he certainly earned that rank later on.

And then finally came the terrible day of surrender when we had to run up the white flag and say to the Japanese forces, we surrendered. They swarmed over Corregidor, as you know, and the episodes of what took place at that time may never totally be known by any of us, except we do know that what followed was the infamous Bataan Death March, when our men were marched up the Bataan Peninsula and cruelly assaulted, murdered on the way. I spent a good deal of time in Japan, and I want to say that the Japanese are delightful people normally.

And a Japanese man, when he wears his toga, and he has his sandals on, and he's drinking ceremonial tea, is a gentleman par excellence. Take that from him and put him in a uniform, and somehow he becomes nearly a beast in his treatment of others. And the chapter concerning the Death March of Bataan is one of the darkest in our history.

But the night that MacArthur left, he turned to Jonathan Wainwright, who was succeeding him, and his nickname was Skinny Wainwright. He was a skinny man. When the Japanese were finished with him, months, months, months later, you could almost put your fist down between his collar and his throat.

He was a gaunt skeleton of a man. But General MacArthur said, Skinny, I want you to spread this message. Hold out as long as you can, but spread the message throughout the Philippines.

Get it out till every Filipino hears it. I will return. You can count on that.

I will return. And with that, he was off to Australia. I understand that from then on, when we eventually began to drop supplies to those soldiers that did escape, and the brave Filipinos who fought back from the jungles against the Japanese, that every cartridge of ammunition, every package of cigarettes, every six pack of beer, every bit of supply that was dropped from the sky, parachuted down to reinforce these fighting men still holding out against the superior force of the Japanese, had stamped on it somewhere these words, I will return.

What a great word of encouragement that must have been in the dark, dark days that followed, when perhaps they were tempted to give in and say it's not worth it. We can't fight them. Maybe it's better to surrender.

There was always that thrilling, challenging word, I will return. And their hopes were buoyed up by the promise of that man in whom they had confidence. And then, as I stood there and thought about all of that, I remembered the day when, later on, General MacArthur waded ashore in Leyte Gulf, and they stuck a microphone right in his face at the water's edge, and he announced over what was left at that time of the Philippine radio, all throughout the Philippines, the word went, the general said, I have returned.

I've come back. And from that moment on, defeat was turned into victory. And eventually, you know what happened, we took over the Philippine islands.

Well friends, when I remembered all of that, I remembered also the words of our blessed savior just on the eve of his departure from this earth, when he had his disciples together in just a small private gathering, that night when he washed their feet, and he gave them that magnificent discourse that's recorded for us in the very heart of the gospel of John. You remember what he said to them? I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again. I'll come again.

I will return. And for 20 long centuries, the church of Jesus Christ, battered, persecuted, sometimes driven into holes and dens of the earth, the church has still believed that that promise of the Lord Jesus Christ would be fulfilled, and that he will surely come again. We have his word for it.

I will return. So maybe it's fitting tonight, in this closing message of your conference season, for us to think about the Lord's return. Who can think about anything else in the light of the turbulent world in which we're living? Who would have believed at the beginning of your conference, even last Christmas, that all of Europe would be in the turmoil it's in tonight? Who would have dared stand up and say, the Berlin Wall will come down? Who would have said, with any degree of sanity, Communism will crumble in Eastern Europe, and the nations of that part of the world will turn away from it in disgust, and seek a whole new social regime? None of us dared to believe.

We are living in historic times. We are living in a period of history that will be recorded if there's time enough. I hope there isn't.

I hope there won't be any new editions of history books. There won't be time to print them. But if there were time, it will be recorded that this was the most momentous period of the 20th century, at least, and maybe modern history.

Now when we think about the Lord's return, we wish we knew more about that event than we do. We do know some things about it. Our Lord did not tell us too much, just a few meager details.

We treasure every one of them. We put them together and try to discern, if we can, how he will come. If you dare to say that you believe that Jesus Christ will return to this earth again, you immediately raise a lot of questions.

When will he come? Where will he come? How will he come? What's going to happen when he comes? What will happen immediately after he comes? All those are legitimate questions. We have a right to ask them, and we have a right to seek if it's found, if answers are found in the holy scriptures, we have a right to seek them. Now we owe the apostle Paul a debt of gratitude for giving us a few more details concerning the Lord's return.

And when we put together what little knowledge we have about this great event, we discover this, that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ back into the stream of humanity, back into our world, back into history, is apparently divided into two phases. You know, his first coming was a series of events. When we stand here and we say, when Jesus Christ came to this earth, stop.

What do you mean? Do you mean when he came as a baby? You may say, oh no, I don't mean that. I mean, and then you fill in the blank. Do you mean when he came and was baptized by John in the river, or in the river of Jordan? No, I don't mean that.

Do you mean when he came to die on the cross? You see, the first coming of Jesus was a series of events stretched out over about 30 some odd years. So that when we're talking about his first coming, we

have to pinpoint an event so that we know precisely what we're talking about. Now the same thing is true concerning his second coming.

It too is a series of events, not now spread out over some 30 odd years, but compressed into a much shorter span of time. We discover, for instance, that the very first event in the second coming of Christ appears to be a miraculous, marvelous, wonderful thing, which we have labeled the rapture of the saints, the rapture of the church. And then we begin to describe what we mean by the rapture of the church.

And incidentally, if somebody is sitting here right now saying, I perceive that you, brother, are a pre-tribulationist, and I don't agree with you. First of all, I'm going to tell you wrong, and I'm right. You say, don't be so egotistical.

It's purely intentional, purely intentional. I am a pre-tribulationist. I'm a pre-millennialist.

I'm a pre-anything. I'm not a post-anything. I don't even eat post-toasties for fear somebody will get my breakfast food mixed up with my eschatology.

So I am a believer in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. I don't see how anybody can believe anything else. But nonetheless, the second coming of Christ then is introduced by what we call the rapture of the church.

That will involve living and dead saints, primarily. The dead in Christ, who have died in faith in him, will be raised from their graves, and the living who are born again will be caught away from earth's scene, and joined with the dead, and will meet the Lord in the clouds of heaven, and will from then on be forever with him. Now, that's only the beginning of the second coming of Christ.

There are other events which may properly be called his second coming. They involve the period of time immediately following the rapture, which we label, that short period of time, the great tribulation period, and eventually include his coming to take over the reins of control of the world, setting up his kingdom here. So that when we speak of the second coming of Christ, as when we speak of his first coming, we have to sort of pinpoint what event we're talking about.

For the sake of convenience, Bible students have called the first phase of the Lord's return the rapture, and the second phase, when he shall come in his glory to take control and rule on the earth, we call the revelation. Now, right at this particular point, there are some questions that need to be asked. What about signs of the times, for instance? Can we believe in signs? Are there signs given to us concerning the imminency of the Lord's return? Now, that word imminency is a very important word.

That's a biblical doctrine, by the way, the imminency of the Lord's return. Now, what it really means is that the event is likely to take place at any moment, at any moment. Any of you who may have lived some time or another in the New York metropolitan area, as we have spent all of our lifetime practically there, will recognize the fact that it's almost a standing joke concerning the schedules of the Long Island Railroad.

The Long Island Railroad is notably never on time, never on time. It's always late, always running late. Now, just suppose you lived way out on the island, and you had to catch that train in the morning to get to Manhattan to get to work, and you are going to catch the 703, say, 703 train.

Like most New Yorkers or people living there, you gulp down your breakfast, you seize the last piece of toast on the way out the door, your wife holds it just at mouth level, and you grab it and keep on going,

chewing as you go, and you look at your watch as you run up on the platform, and you say, I think I just made it, 702 on my watch. But, you haven't heard any rumble on the rail, and there's a crowd of people up there, the usual crowd, waiting for the train to come. You stand around for a little while, you watch, you look at your watch, and it gets to be 704, then 705, then 706, 707, and it dawns on you that this train is, again, late.

Now, have you ever noticed what people do on a train platform when the train is late? How that somebody leans out over the rail and looks down the track, like this, and then 196 people follow his example, and they look down the track as if that look is going to hasten the train. It would be much smarter if somebody climbed out and put his ear on the rail, and you could even hear the thing coming, see. But, at any rate, do you go back home to finish your breakfast? Why, no, you wouldn't dare do that.

Why? Because you know that while that train is scheduled to come, you don't understand why it is delayed in its coming, but it is liable to come at any moment, and so you wait patiently, or maybe impatiently, you wait for it till it arrives. But its coming is imminent, liable to happen at any moment. Now, perhaps we can say that about our Lord's coming.

We don't understand always why God seems to have delayed our Savior's coming back again. We speak, we sometimes use terminology we don't always really mean when we say that, after all. And we talk about hastening the Lord's return.

Frankly, I'm not certain that we can do a single thing to change the calendar of God so that his son will come two days earlier than he had planned. I think it's marked on God's calendar when he will send his son back with a voice of the archangel, the trump of God, and the shout from heaven to take his own to be with himself. Now, we do use the phrase, the terminology, hasten the Lord's return.

We're not always so sure how we can explain that, but the fact still is that we're anticipating the coming of the Lord Jesus at any moment in time. Therefore, we may speak properly of his coming as being imminent, liable to take place at any moment. Now, however, we ask ourselves, is it possible to discern any evidences, any signs, we use that term, any signs that would indicate how near we may be to the Lord's return? Well, first of all, I think the Bible would teach us that we're not to be looking for the signs and reading signs of the times, and thus judging by what we interpret those signs to say as to exactly when the Lord Jesus will come, else we might fall into traps, and some have fallen into some traps because they have made this mistake.

Let me use another illustration. I'm driving down from the north. I don't have a map.

I am really headed for Titusville, Florida. I hit Jacksonville, and I say I must be near Titusville. I don't know how near I am, nor how far.

I don't know whether it's four miles, 14 miles, or 40 miles away. I do notice this, however, as I drive along the highway, Miami is marked on the signpost. It's 320 miles, say.

I don't know exactly. Then, as I drive along, the signposts tell me how near I am to Miami, and all I know is that Titusville is before I get to Miami, so if the signs will dictate to me and tell me how close I am to Miami, I may then say, since Titusville is nearer than Miami, then how much closer must I be to Titusville? Now, I believe that the signs that are given to us in the scriptures are the signs that can be properly assigned to the Miami phase of the Lord's coming, the revelation phase, the father end. Here I am in this moment in

history.

How near are we to the Titusville rapture point? I don't know, but I know that when I can read some signs that tell me how close I am to Miami, then I know that I am a great deal closer to Titusville than I imagined. And so, when I read some signs of the times that surely seem to point to the revelation phase of the Lord's coming, then I know that the rapture aspect is nearer than I first suspected. Now, we then conclude from the signs of the times that they are spelling out the far event of the Lord's return.

How much nearer then must we be to the nearer phase of the Lord's return? Let me now suggest a few of the signs that I see that indicate how close we may be to the rapture, to the revelation phase of the Lord's return. Let's talk for a moment about the preparations of society for the tribulation period. That term, tribulation, by the way, doesn't come out of theological works.

It comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus himself. He's the one who used that term of the period of time that follows the rapture. He said those days will be days of great tribulation.

He said that the trouble of those days will be unlike anything that has ever happened before or will ever happen again. Now, I remind you that the great tribulation period, though a very short period of time, is not primarily a time of salvation. It is not a period during which God's plan and purpose is to save people.

Yes, there will be a large number of people saved during the tribulation period, but in this age of grace in which we're now living between the first coming of our Savior and the rapture aspect of the Lord's return, this is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. This is the period during which God is calling out of the world a people for his name, and that called out people are called the Ecclesia, the church, and they are given a distinct title, the church which is his body.

Now, I don't believe that Abraham was in the church, and I don't believe David was in the church, and I don't think Isaiah was in the church. None of the Old Testament saints were in the church. They were in Israel.

They were related to God as a covenant people, but I want to tell you that it's living in this age of grace and to be saved and to be a member of the body of Christ is a very distinct privilege. We belong to a very special group, the church which is his body, and that's God's plan and purpose. Now, when this age is concluded at the rapture, then God will begin to establish or to work on his judgmental purposes.

It's a time of judgment, and the three objects of divine judgment during that period are, in the first place, the Jewish people. They'll be under the fire of divine judgment, and God's purpose will be to cure them once and for all of their rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and open their blinded eyes that they may truly see him who was pierced for them on Calvary's tree. That can only come about as a result of judgment, and then God will be judging the Gentile nations for their rejection of him.

These judgments are all spelled out in the last book of the Bible. The very heart section of the book of Revelation is an astounding, mind-boggling revelation of what it's like when God begins to pour out his wrath in wave upon wave upon wave of judgment upon godless men. And the third object of God's judgment during that period will be the apostate church.

The purpose of the tribulation period, then, primarily, is judgment, not salvation. Salvation is incidental to the primary purpose of the great tribulation period. That is a time of judgment.

Now, are we close to the tribulation period, say? Can we discern some signs that would indicate maybe how near we are to that period? I suggest four signs that indicate, in general culture, by the way, I seldom recommend a book from the pulpit lest people think that we're concerned about, you know, just book reviews, but there is one book I wish every Christian in this audience would buy and read. If you haven't got it, you must get it. You must hot your socks and buy it.

Do anything. Borrow the money if you haven't got it, but get it. It's Charles Coulson's latest book, *Against the Night*.

I tell you, it is an eye-opener in which he spells out, his basic thesis is, how totally corrupt is the culture we call Western civilization, and how it teeters, just teeters, on the edge of total disaster. We are within a breath of its total collapse. Fascinating, fascinating book.

Two nice things about it. The chapters are short, and the print big. The price is terrible, but that's true of all books, I guess.

But do, please, borrow it or read it for yourself. It'll give you some insights you may not have had. Now, I think that we're being prepared for the Great Tribulation period in at least four different ways.

First of all, there is an increasing ignorance of the Word of God. I'm talking about general society now. I'm not talking about some specific areas, some places in the world where the Spirit of God has breathed upon people, and there's been a sweet refreshing breath of revival.

I'm talking about general society. There is an increasing ignorance of the Word of God. Listen to some of our brilliant leaders, our political leaders, when they quote the Bible.

Do you ever notice how they mess it up? How they misquote it? How they half-quote it? How their application sometimes borders on the asinine? Which indicates they don't really truly understand the truth of God's Word. There is an increasing ignorance of the Word of God. I can't vouch for all this story, but they say that up on Long Island some years ago, they had release time religious education in the school.

That merely meant that there was a period of time when students could get out of classes, and they could take a course in religion, and they would have a rabbi or a priest or a minister come in and teach the kids. Well, there was one pastor who told this story. He said he had a class, and he had to be absent from his class for a couple of weeks.

So, he asked a neighboring pastor if he would become his substitute and teach the kids. Well, this substitute had a shocking experience. First day, these kids were about in the seventh grade.

They're about, you know, the horror stage of life. And so, he thought he'd begin the class, capture their attention by saying, who knocked down the walls of Jericho? And in the back row, there was a freckle-faced red-headed kid who shot his hand up, and he said, I didn't do it. Well, that kind of took this fellow back, you know.

So, he thought I better quit this method, and he stopped asking questions and started to try to teach. But he was so disturbed by this that on the way out, he went, he saw the teacher of that class, and he recited to her what happened. Oh, she said, well, that's a red-headed kid with an awful lot of freckles across his nose, and oh yeah, that's the one.

Oh, she said, that's Freddie Jones. She said, he is an imp. He's always in trouble.

She said, well, I don't think you should make a big fuss about it. Why don't you go and tell the principal? So, he thought, well, I'll go and tell the principal. So, he went into the principal's office, and he told the story about this kid, and how he'd responded to that question, and all the rest of it.

And the principal said, now look, Reverend. He said, I think you're making a big fuss over this. I don't know who did it either, but he said, if you want to, you could take it to the school board.

So, he thought, now I'm on this path, I can't back up. I'll go all the way up to the school board, which he did. Asked for a few moments on their agenda.

They gave it to him. He told the story. And when he was finished, the chairman of the school board said, now look, Reverend.

We think you're really making a big deal out of nothing. Why don't we just let it go? Nobody here knows who knocked down those walls, but the school board would be glad to pay for half of it. Now, you may say, ah, come on.

That's too good. Well, maybe it is. I said I couldn't vouch for the truth of it.

But, I tell you, I know some people in our educational system of whom this could probably be told. They're very ignorant of the word of God. That's true in our society.

Then, I think another sign that we are approaching the tribulation period, is what I'm pleased to call the decreasing power of the witness of God. Jesus said, you're the salt of the earth. But he also said, if the salt have lost its favor, is he there hinting at the probability, or even the possibility, that the salt might lose its saltiness? And if so, he says, what good is it? It's good for nothing, except to be trampled underfoot.

No good. So, I think that we are witnessing in our society, the decreasing power of the witness of God. Our churches are not making much of an impact on the neighborhood round about us.

If it's true that we have 80 million born-again people in America, as they tell us we do, what kind of an impact are we making upon the morality of our nation? It seems to be minimal. Minimal. What's wrong with it? Well, I think it's because the salt has lost its favor.

There is a boldness that marked the early believers that's lacking today. Today, we're so concerned about tax, that we forget the attacks. Some of us can remember when we first were converted, we were so filled with love of Christ, we would have witnessed to the President of the United States if he came down, without any hesitation whatsoever.

Now, we've come to the place where we we're very cautious about things, lest we offend the people. We don't want to offend them. You can win more people with honey than with vinegar.

That's Proverbs 87 13. They're quoting the scriptures. Some of you look like you'd believe that.

But it's true that our witness is minimal and powerless, it seems in this day. There is a third evidence that we are close to the tribulation period. I call this the acceleration of deception.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, it talks very distinctly about deception with great swelling word. Will men be deceived? They'll love untruth rather than truth. We are living in a day when we can hardly believe anybody's record about anything.

Have you read a newspaper account of something that happened to you in public lately? You don't even recognize the event, do you? It's so twisted. It lacks truth. We are in a terrible state.

We can't even believe. Sometimes our national leaders, they deceive us. They tell us downright lies sometimes for the sake of expediency, they tell us.

So, we're treated through an acceleration of deception. And then there's a fourth evidence, it seems to me, that we're moving into the shadows of the tribulation, abounding iniquity. Our Lord said in Matthew 24 12, that it's because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

The shadows of the tribulation period are casting themselves backward into our culture and our society. And the trouble is that we have become so accustomed to the encroaching darkness that we hardly are aware of it, since we live as close as we do to New York City on a very rare occasion. I must say it's rare, it gets rarer as prices go up, but I have taken my wife to a very expensive restaurant in New York City.

Now when I go, you know, we walk in from the daylight on the outside, if it's early enough, and I say to her, oh I've gone blind. It's so dark in there you can't see anybody. And then I get the feeling that they have seeing eye dogs that lead you to your table.

It is so dark in these dens, in these high-class restaurants, you know. But after a little while, if you sit there long enough, you know, you can tell you've got neighbors to the left of you, neighbors to the right. There are other people eating too, and pretty soon you can see everything quite clearly.

Oh I'm so glad they realized that I wanted more light, and they turned the lights up a little bit. They haven't touched the lights at all. What has happened is that we have become acclimated, accustomed to the darkness, and now we see a little more clearly than we saw when we first came in.

When we talk about the encroaching tribulation period, and the darkness that shall defend upon humanity in general, maybe there is some skepticism among some people. They get cynical about it, and even some Christians. But you know, dear friends, we are living in a day when the darkness has increased to such a degree that we're hardly aware of it, hardly aware of it, and we become acclimated to the darkness of the day in which we live.

Now every time I speak on a subject like this, I berate myself afterwards. There isn't a preacher I know that hasn't got this problem, that he cuts out far too much for himself to discuss in one single message. And so he looks out on the audience to see how many glazed eyes there are, how many folks are nodding, and how many shake their watches.

Look at, you're going to look at your watch. Don't shake it, please. You know, just look and put it back again.

But then I say, brother, you've cut out far more than you can handle in one message. I've done that tonight, so I confess my sin in advance. But if you'll bear with me, give me just a couple minutes more.

I want to say that the Bible also, prophetic scriptures seem to indicate that there will be an alignment of nations in the end time, which we seem to see taking place right now. If I understand that prophetic scriptures are right, there are going to be four great political military powers that will control the events of the last days before our Lord comes to establish his kingdom on the earth. Let me name them.

One has been called for a long time by students of eschatology, the great northern confederacy, and has reference to Russia and her allies. And that power from the north is going to exert tremendous influence upon Israel and upon the events of the last days. Some of us are having a little trouble getting the pens put back up again in the light of what's happened in these last few days, or weeks, I should say.

The second great political military power is what has been called the European coalition. It grows out of the formation of the European common market. Now this is a powerful entity taking shape right now in Europe.

What started as an economic union has rapidly moved toward a political union, and we may expect some exciting things to happen from that coalition. According to prophetic scriptures, there will be at least 10 kingdoms that will be involved in this European coalition. The third great political military power that is mentioned in the scriptures is called the kings of the south.

It probably refers to the Arab-African combination that will move against Israel. The fourth great political military power are called the kings of the east, or the orient. You know we've lived to see these giants of the east awaken from their long slumber of the past.

They're awakened. They're going to exert powerful influence upon the politics of the future days. These four great powers will all come into play in the end time events that lead up eventually to that moment when he shall come whose right it is to rule and reign.

And in the midst of all of these signs, we're still thinking in terms of sign evidences as to how close we may be to that farther event, the event called the revelation. And in the midst of them all is what is happening to Israel, God's covenant people. And we ought to watch very carefully what's taking place in that part of the world.

So there you put all these chessmen on the board, and we hear the Lord Jesus Christ himself saying, I will come again. How close is thy coming, Lord Jesus? He says you can read some of these signs, and they all point to that moment when I shall come in the glory that is mine. And so my coming for you is nearer maybe than you can imagine or have ever imagined up to this point.

I read some time ago about the men in the fishing villages up in northern Scotland, and they would go out into the cold northern Atlantic to fish. Sometimes they'd be gone for weeks, even months, most of the winter they'd be gone. And then they'd come back to the villages all up and down the rugged coast of northern Scotland.

On this particular occasion, one of these boats was coming back from a long stint at sea, and as the ship got closer to the quay, and all the villagers apparently had come out to greet the men. The village had been without men for these weeks and months. They were standing on the quay waiting for their men to come.

The captain climbed up a little higher on the mast, and he had a powerful pair of binoculars, and he began to call out to the men in the crew something like this. John, I can see you're merry. I picked her out of the

crowd.

She's there. And Bill, right, there's Edith. I see her.

I recognize her. She's waiting for you. And so on he went, calling out name after name.

He knew them all. There was one man in the crew who kept saying, Captain, is my Alice there? And the captain would let his glasses scan the crowd, and he'd say, can't pick her out, Jim. Can't pick her out.

But I'm sure she's there. But he was just as sure she was not. And so when that boat got close enough that he didn't, he could safely jump from boat to quay, with his bag slung over his back, he jumped off the boat, began running up the hill.

Their cottage was just beyond the hill that overlooked the harbor. And as he ran up to the top of the hill, he looked, and he saw a little thin wisp of smoke coming from the chimney of their little cottage nestled up against the next mountain. But still he ran, and eventually got there, burst into the house, and there standing at the stove cooking, was his wife Alice.

And when she heard his steps, she turned and she said, oh, Jim, I've been waiting for you. I've been waiting, oh, so long. I've missed you so much.

I've been waiting for you. And with a bit of rebuke, he said to her, I know you've been waiting for me. But you know the others, they were waiting, and they were watching too.

But you weren't watching. You see, a lot of God's people are waiting for the Lord to come. But it's possible to be waiting and not watching.

Not on tiptoe expectancy, ordering every event of your day in the light of the Lord's coming. Are you watching as well as waiting? Let's pray. Lord, when we began this day, we sat at this table of remembrance, and our minds took us back to that tree on Golgotha's brow.

And there we remembered all that it cost thee to save us from hell. We thought upon thine agony and thy suffering. We thought upon the shame and the ignominy heaped upon thee that rightly was ours.

We thought of the strife laid upon thee with which we've been healed. And our eyes took us back, the eyes of our faith, to Calvary. But we remember, dear Savior, that it is written in thy word, as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup,

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