

# A Date to Remember

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of remembering the return of Jesus Christ and living in anticipation of that day with spiritual alertness and faithfulness.*

**Duration:** 25:39

**Scripture:** Acts 20:26

**Topics:** "Encouragement"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of having a dream while on vacation in Jamaica. He emphasizes that he rarely has dreams from the Lord and is not one to sensationalize his experiences. In the dream, he is walking down a street in Brooklyn when suddenly he feels a strong conviction to follow Jesus and commit his life to Him. The speaker then leads the audience in a prayer of salvation, urging them to accept Jesus as their Savior and commit to serving Him. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of believing in Jesus' return and the need for a personal relationship with Him.

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## Transcript

I've been giving you some dates to remember. Mark down this date in your mind. Remember, oh, November, it's election day.

Remember election day? Remember Christmas Eve, Christmas Day? I wear size 16-34 if you wanna get me a shirt. Remember New Year's Eve? We're gonna have two services here on New Year's Eve. I got another date that you should remember.

But I wanna fulfill two things in the Bible that it tells me to do as a pastor. Number one, encourage the people and also instruct them about certain teaching in the scripture, which we haven't mentioned here for a while. In the early church, a rumor started, you know, Jesus died, rose from the dead, went back to heaven, and then the apostles went out to preach.

Well, Christianity then started forming little churches and whatnot. Then people died. Some Christians would die.

Remember the lifespan back then was, if you'd made 50, you were really living a long time. So a rumor began, it's not gonna be so good for the people who already died before this promised return of Jesus Christ. Because when Jesus was talking to the disciples, he said, now, look, I go to prepare a place for

you that where I am, you may be also.

So Paul, hearing about that, wrote a letter, and this is the day I want you to remember. Because one way or another, all of you are gonna keep it. I don't know where all of us will be at Christmastime, but this is a date we're all gonna have to mark down.

Listen to it. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Well, you mean they're in the dirt now? No, what the Bible teaching is, and this is good to remember, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

So when a Christian dies, their spirit goes immediately to be in the presence of God. But on this day when Christ returns, which is totally supernatural, but then, of course, Christianity is all supernatural. Everything about this earth is supernatural.

Because how could something come from nothing? How do we have all these continents and oceans and human beings? When everyone knows matter is not eternal, so how did something come from nothing? Oh, no, you see, there was one cell or one little thing, the evolutionists tell us. Well, fine, but who made the cell out of nothing? Then Jesus was born of a virgin. How does that happen? And then he rose again from the dead.

How does that happen? And then he ascended, violating the laws of gravity, and he ascended up in front of the apostles. And it was so real that they risked their lives, and they went about preaching this, that he died, rose again from the dead, and we saw him go back, and he's gonna come back again one day. And they said, if you keep spreading that, we will kill you, how about that? And they said, you can kill us, you can do whatever you want, but we're not gonna lie about what we saw.

Now, that's kind of hard for me to believe that someone would make up a lie and then die for it. Well, they were getting money for it. No, they lost all their money for it.

How about that? They lost their money. They didn't get any money from it, because for money, people will do anything, make up any kind of lie. But these folks lost everything.

But they wouldn't let go of what happened to them. We saw him, and he's coming back again. In fact, when he left up in Acts chapter one, the angel said to him, why are you gazing up there? That same Jesus is coming back one day.

So now, when he comes back, and all those who have gone before is gonna come with him, but some particle, some atom, the Bible's not clear, some part of our natural bodies, no matter how we died, where we're buried, or whatever, somehow these bodies are gonna be joined, a heavenly body are gonna be applied to the spirits of the people who have been justified and saved through the blood of Jesus Christ, and we are gonna be given the body that we need to be in heaven for all eternity, because these bodies break down. Have you noticed your bodies breaking down? These bodies, they're not made for heaven. Everyone who's gonna be with the Lord for eternity is given a resurrection body, and every indication is, my grandson asked me yesterday, will we know each other in heaven? Well, every indication, we will know each other in heaven, but these bodies will never break down, and they'll never get tired, and we'll never cry, and there'll be no temptation to sin, and we'll never be discouraged, and we'll never be depressed, and we're gonna be with the Lord forever and ever.

Can we say amen to that? That's the hope of the church. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then, after that, whatever that means, it looks like we who are still alive and are left, and Paul thought back then it would be we, including him, there's an old saying, the day is not known, so every day is kept sacred.

Listen, the day that he comes back is not known by anyone, including Paul, so that every day is kept sacred and to be ready. We'll be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever, as in no more time, no more hours, no more minutes. Therefore, Pastor Cimbala and believers encourage each other with these words.

This is called the rapture of the church. This is the classic passage of scripture that tells us that a day is coming when the Lord is gonna say, it's time. Jesus actually will be sent by the Father, and there will come a moment when time is gonna end.

He's gonna sew things up now, and this day of the Lord, there's Christians disagree on the exact sequence, but this we can be sure of. A moment is coming when Christ is gonna descend, and there will be a rising up of every believer, and the dead in Christ, their bodies are gonna be transformed and applied to the spirits of these people who are already with the Lord. That's the hope of the church.

The payoff for Christianity, no matter what the televangelists tell you, the payoff for Christianity is not here on earth. Here on earth, we have tribulation. Here on earth, we have trouble.

Here on earth, we have to deal with the devil. Here on earth, we have spiritual warfare. Here on earth, the flesh fights against the spirit, and the Holy Spirit against the flesh.

Here on earth, we intercede and pray for people that we love, but a moment is coming when all of that will end. You must know that date. You've gotta live for that date, or else my whole life is a failure, because when that day comes, we can't be involved in nonsense and somehow miss it.

How many are planning, if you're alive, to be lifted up in the air and meet the Lord in the air? I wasn't planning on saying this, and I wanna shorten this and get to some other passages, but I feel this is what I'm supposed to do. So I'm in Jamaica, and if you've heard this, you bear with me. I'm in Jamaica 15, 18 years ago on a vacation with my wife.

Nothing unusual about the day, nothing unusual. I ate, and no great seeking of the Lord that day. I was really on vacation, reading my word, but trying to enjoy the beaches that we were on, the hotel.

I go to bed at night. I've only had two or three dreams that were from the Lord, I believe, in my life. I'm not a sensationalist, I hope.

I'm not one who likes to say, oh, the Lord told me this, the Lord told me that. I get nervous around people who talk like that. How many get nervous, too, when you're around people, like they're having a running conversation with the Lord? I go, and I have a dream, and I'm walking down the street here in Brooklyn.

I'm repeating this for a reason here, for somebody to hear this, and as I'm walking down the street, it's like late afternoon, and there's this fog, purple, gray, black fog in front of me, but it's huge, and I realize, to me, to keep going down the street, to walk where I have to go, I have to go through that, so I step into it, and now I can't see hardly, can't see a foot in front of me, and it smells, and it's hard, it's ugly, it's difficult, but I have to keep pressing ahead. Something's just telling me, you gotta walk on, walk on, so I'm walking on, I'm going through it. This is so vivid, it's more real than this monitor.

I get through it, whatever it symbolizes. I have my suspicions, and now it's nighttime, and I'm still on this avenue, and I'm walking, and it's nighttime, and I look up, and I see the stars. It's a crisp night now.

It's no more fog at all, nothing murky, crystal clear, and suddenly, I hear windows being flying open around me. Windows are just, the shutters are going up on the windows, and people are sticking out their head, not out of every window, just some windows, and people are yelling down at me and saying, he's come, the moment has come, he's come back, and I'm looking around, and there's an exhilaration, and people are shouting and just getting all kinds of happy, and suddenly, with no warning, I am just, they go flying out the windows, and I am just being elevated from the earth. Brothers and sisters, as God is my holy witness, I'm telling you the dream, you take it for what bears witness with you.

I'm being elevated like 1,000 miles a second, and I'm looking back down on the earth, and before I can even like catch my breath, the earth is like this big, and then this big, and now it's so small, and I realize that nothing that happened down there was important. Nothing that I own, nothing, I'm not taking anything with me, because there's no warning, I'm gone, and now I'm rushing upward and upward, and I'm saying, wow, and just everything's happening, and all these people are shouting, and people are just rejoicing and shouting, the shouting of it all, and like it's over, it's over, we're going home, he's here now, and I'm going, he's here, and then I look up, and there's this cloud, like to give you an idea, my body and the ceiling of this church, but multiplied by 1,000 times, and I'm going up, and it's just this white cloud of glory, it's not a cloud, it's something else, but I don't know what it is, except it's brilliant, it's white, it's shining, it's something, and I'm heading up so quick, but it's so high that it's taking a while to get there, and everyone's going, and then I'm trying to get my bearings, and I look up, and I realize I'm going into that, we're all gonna go into that, we're gonna go into that, but what's in there, who's in there? And as I get closer, and I look up again, I realize I can't go in there, I'm gonna die, I feel like I'm gonna die, it's so awesome and so magnificent that my body, it seems, I won't be able to take it, but in a good sense, not in a bad sense, and then just as I'm approaching it and getting near it, boom, I wake up, and I jolt out of the bed, I raise up like I'm having a heart attack, and my wife gets up and says, what's wrong, did you have a heart attack? That's what she said, and I'm just up in my bed, my heart is pounding, to me, no ordinary dream whatsoever, and I said, no, I just had a dream, she said, what, tell me, what? I said, I can't, and I just slowly lay down in bed, I don't know what, I slept that night for the next day or two, you can ask her, I just walked around like in a daze. Whether that was a picture for me, of what this is describing, I'll leave that with you, but I wanna tell you something, if you're a believer, you're leaving this earth.

Jesus is coming again. Now, because he has never come like this, he was born of a virgin 2,000 years ago, because he's never come like this, unbelief, the world, Satan logic says, no, that's never gonna happen, that's just sensationalistic, like they mocked Noah when he was building an ark, and he said, a flood is coming, and they went, yeah, sure, sure, pal, you're old, and you're a little senile, keep building your ark, just play with your crayons, and we'll let you fade out the scene, and then nobody, nobody, nobody was laughing. Oh, when the first drops fell, it was just, yeah, it was a little shower, we haven't had rain around here for a long time.

What do you think they were thinking when the rain was this, when the water was this high? You say, well, I don't believe that, then you don't believe Jesus, then Jesus is a liar, because he said he would come back. So Jesus is either the Son of God, and he's telling us the truth, or if he's lying, he's a fraud, and we're wasting a lot of time in this building here today, because eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die, what does it matter? Hitler's gonna have the same end as Mother Teresa, and Billy Graham's gonna have the same end as Joseph Stalin, or some mass murderer, they're all gonna have the same end, but

you know, you know, God put in your conscience, you know that's not true, you know there'll be a separation, you know there'll be a judgment, God put that in us. And even tribes in the uttermost parts of the earth that have never had any contact with the word of God, when they see a little girl, 12 years old, being raped by someone, or they see an older woman being robbed and beaten, something in them goes after them, and tries to stop it, because they know it's wrong, but why is it wrong? Who says it's wrong? Animals don't do that.

Who put conscience in us? Animals don't feel bad. When one lion is eating a little animal, no other lion comes and says, back off, leave that little thing alone. No, he jumps in himself and eats it.

We're not animals, we're created in God's image, and we have a decision to make, and if we serve Jesus Christ, he's gonna come back and get us. And that's the payoff. Here we go through trouble.

If you're looking for a perfect life here, you're gonna be depressed. How many have problems since you've been a Christian? Come on, wave your hand. But a day is coming.

How will it come? When will it come? Now brothers, about the times and the dates, we don't need to write you. This is the very next passage. Forget the chapter changes, there's no chapters in the letter Paul wrote.

For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying peace and safety, everything's fine. Destruction will come on them suddenly as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Notice just two things about that. Labor pains on a pregnant woman. No woman knows when she's gonna get that first labor pain.

No woman knows. No doctor can tell her. It can be weeks early, it can be weeks late.

Suddenly, with no warning, it's there. I remember my wife laying in a bed on 79th Street and 11th Avenue where we had our first apartment, and she rose up in the bed, not with a dream, but with a pain, and she said, I gotta go to the hospital. I think she had never had a baby.

This was Chrissy coming into the world, my oldest girl. And we got ready, no warning. And notice the other side of God.

He's love, but they will not escape. All the people who curse God, all the people who reject Jesus Christ, it's not that they can't believe. The Bible says they won't believe because if they believe, they'll have to submit to someone, and that's what we proud humans don't wanna do.

We don't wanna submit. But God gave his son that whoever would believe in him would not perish. This day is gonna happen to you.

This day is gonna happen to everyone here. Well, Pastor Michael, I don't believe it, how about that? Do you think believing something is gonna change whether it happens or not? Either Jesus is right and it will happen, or the Bible is wrong and it won't happen. But it won't have anything to do with what you say or I say.

That's like saying you don't believe tomorrow's Monday. Guess what? It's Monday. No, I don't receive that.

Receive it, it's Monday. Receive it, it's Monday. And finally, now, brothers, about you brothers are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

Thieves don't send emails and say they're coming. They just come. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day.

We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then let us not be like others who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-control. You know what alert means? It means wide awake and sensitive to what the devil's doing, to your own sins, to the fact that Jesus is coming, to the fact that what God, what is he saying to you? That's what alert means here.

It doesn't mean alert in the physical sense. It means spiritually alert. There are people who are sleeping and there are people who are alert, but the alert people are the ones who are watching carefully, keeping their garments clean, not getting engrossed in stuff that's gonna pull them away from the Lord.

They're sensitive what the devil's trying to con them and get over on them, trying to play them. They're alert. They're alert and self-controlled.

No, I'm not gonna give into the flesh because Jesus is coming. What if he comes and when he comes, you're caught in some affair with a third party? That's a symbol, that's very rough to say. What do you want me to do? I only work here.

I have to tell you what the book says. What if he comes and you're caught cursing in your house in front of your children and ruining them, fussing and fighting with your spouse, fighting like a cat and a dog, calling each other names, and he comes right at that moment? What if he catches you in a place you shouldn't be in, talking to someone on the phone when you have no business talking to? Oh, Pastor Cimbala, come on, I don't see it that way. Well, I'm giving you a warning.

You better see it the way God sees it because when he comes, no preacher will save you. No church will save you. Your mommy, daddy, if they were serving the Lord, you can't get it through DNA.

You gotta know the Lord for yourself. You gotta have a relationship. Now, if you don't have a relationship, it's so easy to have one.

He didn't make it hard. And if you're a Christian now, and you say, Pastor, you know what? I've fallen asleep. I'm getting sloppy in my living.

See, the Bible says keep your garments clean because you don't know at what moment, boom, it's gonna happen. Like a woman, like Carol, just, oh, Jim, that was it. What the doctor said it would feel like.

Get me ready to go to my mamma-dee's. Give birth to my first daughter. It'll be just like that.

I don't want any of you in eternity saying, that pastor's a symbol of that rascal. He never told us the truth. He never told us it would be like this.

No, I'm serious. You're laughing, I'm dead serious. Listen, the Bible says make sure to the preacher, make sure you don't have the blood of anyone on your own hands.

You gotta tell people the truth, and you gotta warn them so that I want you running to me in eternity and hugging me and saying, thank you, we're all here, we made it home. Come on, can we say amen to that?

Every eye closed. Let's pray.

If you're here, number one, and you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ, he's not the center of your life. I don't care what church you go to. I don't care where you grew up.

I don't care what color you are. I don't care a thing about anything. My plea to you is please, if you don't have a relationship where Jesus is the most important person in your life, would you please, in a moment, come out of your seat so I can pray over you.

Number two, if you're here, and you have received the Lord at one time in your life, but it's not the way it needs to be, the enemy's made some inroads, come on, fess up. Be a man about the thing, be a woman. You don't think I've been where you are? Don't you think I know what it is to backslide, to get away from God, to fall out of fellowship with him? It's cold, it's lonely, no money, no sex, no sports.

Nothing can satisfy like Jesus, nothing. But who here would say, pastor, pray for me? I wanna be ready when he comes. He's coming like a thief.

I wanna be ready. I gotta change some things today. He convicted me while you were talking.

I need a savior. I know I've sinned. I haven't lived the way I ought to.

This is what the good news is. Though your sins be as scarlet, they'll be whiter than snow. Listen, if you're too, like I've been in my life, too proud to fess up, I don't know what to tell you.

But you have a chance now. Be prayed for and draw a line in the sand. It's nothing about coming publicly.

He died on a cross publicly. If we're not ashamed of him, he'll be ashamed of us. Imagine how the angels, every eye closed.

Imagine how the angels in heaven are right now. They're getting ready to rejoice big time. They don't care about the UN or the White House, the Congress and all of that.

They rejoice when one person repents and turns around and says, I need the Lord. Jesus, we need you. I wanna say to you now as I get ready to pray that if you're involved in any kind of habit or relationship that you know is wrong, God's word says it's wrong, your conscience has told you it's wrong, you must break it today.

Tell him I'm not seeing you anymore. I'm not seeing you anymore. Tell him or tell her.

Or if you have drugs with you or anything else you wanna get rid of that involves a lifestyle you wanna walk away from, I will collect it. I'll take it. But you gotta be serious about this.

It can't be just a little emotion at the end of a service. It's gotta be a drastic commitment and faith statement. Jesus, I'm following you.

Because when you come, I'm going with you. So by being with you here now, that will get me ready to go with you when you come. Please repeat after me.

Dear God. I've heard your word. I believe in my heart.

And I confess with my mouth. That Jesus Christ is the son of God. He died on a cross.

He died for my sins. So that I might be forgiven. He was buried in his tomb.

He rose again from the dead. And then he went back to heaven. I believe he is coming again.

I receive him as my savior. I crown him as my king. I'm gonna spend eternity with Jesus Christ, my Lord.

I am part of the family of God. I'm gonna serve him all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord.

Forever. And ever. And ever.

Keep me close to you, Lord. Help me to walk in humility. Strengthen my faith.

Keep me pure. And clean. I love you, Jesus.

Amen. Let's put our hands together and just praise him. Everybody.

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