

# When He Comes

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and preparing for the second coming of Christ, highlighting the hope and joy it brings to believers.*

**Duration:** 26:57

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:36-37

**Topics:** "Second Coming"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by encouraging the congregation to stay strong in their faith, even when they feel tired. He leads them in a prayer of repentance and belief in Jesus as the Son of God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of love and unity among believers, rather than focusing on material possessions or personal gain. He then discusses the concept of judgment and the division between those who will be with God and those who will be separated from Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder that only the people we have influenced for Christ will matter in eternity, not our earthly possessions or achievements.

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## Transcript

The letter of 1 Thessalonians, which is just a letter to a church, was the first thing Paul ever wrote, the apostle. So since he wrote most of the New Testament, this is very interesting. This is the first time the gospel was ever put into written form and sent to a church.

As we've been reading it, I've been assuming we're like the church that got it. We don't know how long Paul was there, we know he had to leave under pressure, but he could have been there only three or four weeks. Tops, it seems, three or four months.

Yet he founded a church, he left it there, and now these believers were being written to a year later by Paul, who wants to know how they're doing, who wants to encourage him. And one of the causes of his letter is he's learned from Timothy, who he sent there to check on the church, he's learned that there's confusion about the teaching, the correct doctrine of the second coming of Christ. So as we go through this letter, you're gonna see him address it in a very direct way.

But as we're going through this, we hit it now. And as we hit it now, we're gonna stop, because I don't know what any of you know, read the church at Thessalonica, maybe new converts have been made since he wrote, since he was there, and now that letter's gonna be read to them, the letter's gonna be given to

people he knows, and he's reminding them about a key phrase here in this sentence. By the way, just for everyone's understanding, these letters were not sent in an envelope.

These letters were sent by a messenger, and they were read publicly, probably by the senior pastor. So the way the church grew and learned truth was, they would gather and they would say, we have a letter now from the Apostle Paul, our spiritual father, and then they would read it. So let's just look at this part where he's saying how much he loves them.

And again, this is such a reminder to me that if you're a pastor, you can't be a con artist, and you can't be in it for making money. You're supposed to be in it with the same spirit of Jesus. You're supposed to love the people.

In fact, as we see, the people are your crown and your joy when Christ comes back. Not a building, not numbers, not money, not your lifestyle, not a car you own. The only thing I have when Christ comes is you and other people who I've been able to hopefully influence for Christ.

That's a reminder for us. No matter how high or low you live, all you have when you die or when Christ comes is the people you've influenced. We can't take anything else with us.

So let's look at the paragraph here, very short, and then we're gonna jump off of it quickly. But brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you, that's when he had to get out of town for a short time in person, not in thought, out of our intense longing, very strong word in the Greek, he's like in love with them, he's dating them, we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you, certainly I, Paul, did again and again, and here's what I spoke about last Sunday, but Satan blocked our way.

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. So let's look at the bottom, verse 19. For what is our hope? When Christ comes, what is our hope? Our hope is that we're gonna have not just me, but other people.

Paul says, I'm not gonna be just by myself, I'm gonna have all of you with me. What is our joy? What's gonna make us really happy? Not just that I'm saved, Paul says, but that you know Christ. And what is our crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? And then he uses present tense, indeed, you are our glory and joy.

A pastor, a spiritual leader, a choir director, anybody, a Christian, is supposed to have their joy and their glory of the Christians that they've been able to influence or that they're praying for or discipling. That's our glory, that's our joy. And he says it will be that when Christ comes, but that's the sentence I wanna stop on.

In the presence of the Lord when he comes again. Who's coming again? Jesus is coming again. When is he coming? Why is he coming? Who said he's coming? Why hasn't he come yet? What will be the signs of his coming? Will there be a lot of warning when he comes? What's gonna happen when he comes? This word for coming is *parousia*, P-A-R-O-U-S-I-A in the Greek.

It's used seven times in these two letters, first and second Thessalonians. It's used by our Lord, which I'm gonna show you now. And the word can be used of a person coming, but the connotation is not just the coming.

In other words, oh, she came to the church. She came in, I have a new friend, his name is Frank. Today he came to the church, parousia, he came.

But it speaks not only of the coming, it speaks of what happens when he comes and how he stays there. What happens when he comes and stays. Not that he arrived, but that he arrived and then something else happened.

So one of the cardinal teachings of the church, strangely not taught that much now in the media by tele-evangelists and on the radio, although many do, is the fact of Jesus is physically, literally coming back to earth. Not his presence, just he's coming himself. Not to die on a cross, that he did.

He's coming to end history as we know it. He's coming to put a stop to time as we know it. He's coming back to usher in eternity.

A phrase and a concept very hard for us to understand because all of our minds and our lives are based on time, beginning, middle, end. Sunday has a beginning, at midnight it has an end. Eternity has no time, no beginning, no end.

He came once, it was spoken of in the Old Testament, where he would be born, how he would be born by a virgin, what would happen to him when he died. Many, many prophecies. But there's many, many more about his second coming and the fact that he will then, and only then, set up his kingdom.

Satan will be defeated, Satan will be cast away into a place of punishment, and those who served him will go with him, and Jesus is coming back again as King of kings and Lord of lords. Can we say amen, amen? Amen. So this was, during the persecution of the early church, this was a strong truth that they hung on to.

Why would you suffer anything? Why would you be put in prison if the only reward is here on earth? The whole idea of a prosperity teaching and you serve God because then everything will work out better for you here on earth, that's unknown, of course, to scripture. That is taught with an angle of usually lifting money out of your pocket. But here's what Jesus said.

We'll just look at a couple passages and I'll close. This subject, of course, we could teach, I could study this with you for the next six months because there's so much, and we're gonna be coming back to it because of the letter and the problems in that church, and Paul's gonna teach more about it, but let's look at this. John 14, Jesus says, do not let your hearts be trouble.

You believe in God, believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go back to heaven and prepare a place for you, we don't know what that exactly means.

I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. Notice the love that's in that. I'm coming back, why? So that I can take you to be to the place that I'm preparing for you.

So why? So that you can be with me. Why in the world would Jesus wanna be with you and me? Praise his holy name. Praise, can we put our hands together? Praise his holy name.

He loves us so much that he wants us to be with him. And he said the way we will be with him is he has to come back and get us, those that are alive. Those that are already died, they're gonna be with him too.

Their spirits are with him when they pass away. But their resurrected bodies and their coming together with those who are alive when he comes, that will be another teaching for another day. But notice this, I go to prepare a place for you so that where I am, I can bring you to me.

Now let's one more verse passage about Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24. Now that was why he's coming back. This is how he'll come back.

Then will appear the sign of the son of man. He's referring to himself in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Think of that. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn. Why don't they get happy? Why aren't they celebrating? When they see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Why will they mourn? They'll be mourning because they've rejected Jesus. They've rejected the gospel. They've said, I wanna live my way.

I'm not following the one who was crucified. No, no, no, it's my way, okay? I'm not yielding to anyone. But now he's coming in power and great glory.

The one they've mocked, the one they've made fun of, all the media heads, all the movie makers, all the people who have no other use for the name of Jesus except for this. For Christ's sake, would you get out of here? No more will they be saying that. They're gonna mourn.

Jesus said that. I'm not making this up. This is not Jim Simbalist theology.

This is what Jesus said. Look at it again. They will mourn and he will send, when he comes with power and great glory, and he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect, those who belong to him, from the four winds, from everywhere, from one end of the heavens to the other.

And that will be the day we're going home. Praise God. Can we say amen to that? Now, we have no abiding home.

That apartment you live in, that house you have, that is not your home. Jesus got something way better. Forget about middle income housing.

We're going real high cotton. Come on, help me say amen. We got real housing waiting for us.

This was the hope of the church when they were put in prison and persecuted, when some of them sawn in half or fed to animals in the Roman arenas, in the Colosseum in Rome. They hung on because they said, this ain't it. This ain't all that.

If only in this life we have hope, of all the people in the world that should be mocked and ridiculed and felt sorry for is Christians, if only in this life. But Jesus is coming back, and we're gonna go home. What's there in that home, the Bible seems to indicate, it's so incredible that there are no human words to describe it.

You think you know joy. I think I know joy. You have no concept of joy.

But when we see him face to face, with no devil to tempt us, no discouragements, no bad people around us mocking us, making fun of our Christian faith, no physical bodies that can get sick, no pain in our

bodies, no arthritis, no headaches, no acid reflux. Oh, how many say amen for that? Nothing, nothing. Perfect peace, perfect joy.

And when we've been there 10,000 years, it'll be just like we first begun. It seems like the conditions in heaven are such that the mind can't comprehend it. That's why the Bible says no eye has seen, no ear has heard.

It has never entered into the hearts of mankind what God has waiting for us. And that's what held Christians when they were going through a lot, and they were tempted to deny Christ to save their lives. If you deny him and curse him and bow to Caesar, we won't kill you.

But other Christians would say, don't do it. He's coming, don't do it. Don't curse, don't turn back.

It'll be worth it all when we see Jesus. This was the hope of the church. Not here, there.

And when he comes, notice, it's gonna be physical. So, you know, there was that teaching by that false prophet from Korea, Reverend Moon. You remember the Moonies, right? They're still around, but.

That he was the second coming of Christ, just in a Korean form and in a business suit. But Jesus said, no, every eye will see him. He's gonna come in the clouds of glory.

Notice, totally supernatural. Reversing gravity, reversing everything we know. He came supernaturally the first time, born of a virgin.

But now, when he ends things up, when God sends him. And now a final word before we close. In the same chapter, we have seen from John and why he's coming, because he loves us.

And he wants to give us relief. Relief is coming when Jesus comes. Now, we're in spiritual warfare.

How many feel it? Say amen. Amen. Now we're in a world getting increasingly dark.

But when he comes, that all ends. And all the people who were big time on the earth will be running for the hills if they don't know Jesus. And all the humble saints who just kept trusting and serving him, they will shine like stars.

They will be the famous ones. The people who were poor on earth will be rich in heaven because they live for God. And the people who were rich on earth, most of them, will lose everything in an instant because money has no value in eternity.

And there's a great division. There's those who will be with God and those who will be away from God. No purgatory.

No suffering intermediate to get rid of the sins that you couldn't get forgiven through serving God. No, no such teaching. That's why one of the reasons Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation.

There's heaven, there's hell. There's Jesus, there's away from him. And that's why the solemn words.

I'm not trying to be melodramatic. I'm just reading what our Lord said. We know why he's coming, we know how he's coming.

Now how about this last one? Because there's been so much talk over the last few decades about when he's coming, when he will come. You know, back in the 19th century, there were a bunch of sects and cults, which survive even to this day, that were founded by men who predicted, and women, who predicted the exact day that Jesus would come, the exact year. One of those years was 1831.

And people left their jobs, went to mountains, and waited for his return, and he didn't come. The founder of the Jehovah Witnesses, another cult, predicted a year that Jesus would come. I believe it was 1914.

But now here's the final word that Jesus gives. Although we can't know the day, or the time, or the year, he does give us some indication of the atmosphere when he comes back. Watch, look, same chapter.

But about the day or the hour, Jesus said, no one knows. This is strange. Not even the angels in heaven, even stranger, nor the son himself, but only the father.

As it was in the days of Noah, so it'll be at the coming of the son of man. For in the days of Noah, let's come on, read this and analyze it, see what we can deduce. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark.

And they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. This is how it will be at the coming of the son of man. So what do we learn? Obviously, notice the quietness, because that's Jesus talking, that's not me.

That's the Lord now talking about a solemn thing. And there's all kinds of verses in the New Testament about warnings. Be alert, don't be sleeping.

You don't know what day he's gonna come, so what do we deduce from this? No one knows the day or the hour that Jesus is coming back. Anyone who predicts it is a fool. Because if we don't know when he's coming, we also, though, don't know the day he won't come.

So the first thing the Lord wants us to know is don't believe anyone who gives you a day or an hour. You know that guy, I think he died, that guy was on the radio camping, he predicted the day, sold a lot of books, made a lot of money, and then he was discredited because he was wrong twice in a row. No one knows the day, no one knows the hour.

So that is a teaching so that every day we should be ready for Jesus to come. How'd you like him to come and you and I are caught in a compromising situation? It was said that one of the traditions of early Christians was when they woke up and opened the shutters, they would look toward the east where the sun was rising and they would say, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Come today.

How many would be very happy if he came today? Lift up your hand, yeah? No, I know we got plans, we got families, we got grandchildren, I got all that. But oh, I wanna go home, do you wanna go home? I said to the Lord yesterday while I was walking, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. We have work to do, but we gotta live every day like Jesus could come.

What if you're caught in a sinful relationship? What if you're caught beating your wife or your husband? What if you're living a secret life and then Jesus comes? This was a teaching that purified the lives of the Christians, kept the flesh from getting control because they said, no, I can't because this could be the day that Jesus comes. Notice, no warning. Boom! Like it was in the days of Noah.

They were mocking, they were laughing. Noah was called the preacher of righteousness and they were laughing at him. You old fool, you idiot.

What are you building an ark for? An ark for rain? It hardly rains around here. Just like the mocking today. Just like some of you might be mocking me while I'm talking.

Whatever. They mocked Noah, listen. And they said, you fool.

And Jesus, by the way, Jesus obviously believed in Noah and the flood. He knew it was true. And here's the teaching.

Everybody was marrying, giving marriage, going out to restaurants, working on their jobs, investing in retirement IRAs. Everybody was doing everything. There was no warning, no sign in the heavens.

Like, get ready now in a couple days, he's coming. Nothing until the door of the ark was closed. And then only judgment rained down upon the people.

And isn't it interesting? As the judgment in form of rain back then came, it only lifted God's people closer to heaven. As the rain came down, they went up. The ark was buoyed by the water.

And Jesus said, as it was in the days of Noah, that's how it'll be when I come again. People will be so busy living, and only my people will be looking, the ones who know my word, who listen to me, who believe it, who serve me. Hopefully he'll come, you know, like during a choir practice and the choir will be taken right while they're practicing.

Or while I'm preaching, wouldn't it be great if we were all here and we just heard the sound and boom, we're gone, right? But for the world, they'll mourn, they'll mourn. Notice the separation. In the ark or out of the ark? No in between.

Today, you're either in Jesus and you're safe, and you're gonna go be with him for eternity, or you're not in the ark. Jesus has not changed your life. He wants to change your life.

Oh, does he want to change your life? You know what I wish I could do with all of you? I was thinking of this last night and I just broke down. I wish I could take all of you, starting with you, sir, and then you. I wish I could take you one by one, if time permitted, and I could take you in my office and we could just sit.

Just everybody in the building, I love every one of you. I would want to talk to all of you, including the deacons and the members and the choir, and just say to you, how is it with your soul? Because what else matters? Do you have nice clothes? They won't be worth a penny in that day. You got a new iPhone? There's a sign in heaven, no iPhones permitted.

There's total distractions. Notice how values change when you believe this. Now everything you do and everything you have, you measure it not by its value here, but its value then.

Not now, what is it worth then? Oh, let me give a glass of water to that person because that has value when he comes again. Even if you give a glass of water in my name, you will not lose your reward. He's gonna come again.

Jesus is coming again. I want to declare it to you. I want to say it gently to you, but I want to say it seriously to you because I want nobody's blood on my hands.

I want to tell you, he loves you. He wants you to be with him forever. And all you have to do is say, Lord, have mercy on me.

Forgive me of my sin. Give me strength to have victory over it. I want to serve you and not myself.

And he'll welcome you in his arms. What a good word of encouragement for all of us. Lord, we want to pray here in closing two ways.

First of all, God, I ask you to encourage all the believers, all the Christians, to keep on keeping on. Keep on laboring. Keep on serving.

Keep on trusting. Keeping on the narrow path, for there is a wide road. So many are on it, but it leads to destruction.

These are not old-fashioned truths. These are just truths. You said it, Jesus.

We believe it. That settles it. So encourage us all because sometimes we get tired.

Sometimes it's hard. Encourage us, Lord. Secondly, Lord, everybody repeat after me.

Dear God, forgive me of my sin. I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born of a virgin, crucified under Pontius Pilate, but he rose from the dead. He rose from the dead.

He's coming back again. He's coming back. To get me.

To get me. So that I can be with him. So that I can be with him.

For all eternity. For all eternity. Thank you for your mercy.

Thank you for your mercy. I receive it today. I receive it today.

In Jesus' name. In Jesus' name. Make me.

What you want me to be. What you want me to be. For I pray it.

For I pray it. In Christ's name. Amen.

Can we give the Lord a hand clap of praise? Since we're gonna live together for all eternity, let's love one another. Give someone a hug. A handshake.

Come on, everybody greet one another.

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