

The Coming of Our Lord

by Welcome Detweiler

The sermon focuses on the certainty of Christ's return and the importance of sharing personal testimonies of faith with others.

Duration: 42:10

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Topics: "Evangelism", "Apologetics"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to be prepared to answer questions about their faith. He references 1 Peter 3:15, which urges believers to always be ready to explain the hope they have in Christ. The speaker also uses the example of Jesus in Luke 13, where Jesus used a disastrous event to present the gospel message. He then shares a personal anecdote about snake handlers in Durham in 1947, which sparked conversations and debates among the people. The speaker concludes by suggesting that believers should look for current events that relate to the Bible as opportunities to share their faith with others.

Transcript

Wonderful musical, Bind Us Together, and Rod has been giving messages since then on the family. I think this might be a test on the weekend, and I would like to speak to you ladies, that you will be real nice to your husbands and promise that you'll take care of the kids on Friday night and that you will let your loving husband attend that annual men's fellowship in Burlington. It's nice to have fellowship with the believers here in the Gospel Center, but it's also nice to have an annual event where we get to meet brothers from the rest of the assemblies in the area.

A men's fellowship, and I trust you'll urge or encourage your husband to attend that. We want you to sign up, and I think besides leaving here at 5.30 at the Gospel Center Lock, there may be some of you who will find it more convenient to meet at Crosedale, near that bank just as you enter Crosedale, and the few that can meet there and be picked up there, the bus or van will stop there as well. Then, on Saturday, all day, I encourage you husbands to promise to take care of the kids and the dog and cat, whatever you have, and let your wife free to attend that missionary conference, which is also an annual event, just once a year.

I guess this is the first time that the two have come so close together and at the same place, Burlington, Ireland Street Chapel, on Saturday all day, the missionary conference, and then on Friday night before that, the men's fellowship. I trust that you'll take seriously this invitation and ask yourselves, why couldn't I

go? That might be a best way. We need to sign up to tell the people how many meals to prepare at least for that Friday night supper.

This morning will you turn with me to the first epistle to the Thessalonians and chapter 4. First Thessalonians, chapter 4. Before we read our scripture lesson, let's bow again and prepare our hearts for the Lord's message. We ask our Father, thou wilt quiet our hearts and make them honest and receptive in thy presence, and that thou wilt speak to each one of us. We thank thee for thy word and for the power of it, and we thank thee that it is still the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believe it.

We ask our Father, thou wilt make these wonderful truths from thy word real to our hearts. We look to thee for thy blessing on what thou hast laid before us, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reading from verse 16. First Thessalonians, chapter 4. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. One of the best evidences of a biblical conversion is a desire that others around about us might come to know the same Savior. It's difficult to believe that a person could be saved and have no interest at all in whether anyone else comes to know this wonderful Savior or not.

Many perhaps have realized, I do have a desire to tell people about the Savior, but when I was saved I knew very little from the Bible and I didn't know where to start. I thought that probably I ought to go to a Bible school and learn how to preach. However, our Lord Jesus Christ answered that question in the fifth chapter of Mark's gospel when a maniac of Gadara found peace and satisfaction in Jesus Christ, and after he trusted the Savior, our Lord said, Go home and tell what great things the Lord has done for you.

And that can be passed on to every person who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. There is, after all, no better time to start but immediately after you have trusted the Savior, go home and tell what great things the Lord has done for you. Every person who can talk about the weather or anything else can also tell what Christ has done.

In other words, give your testimony. And I think this is something that we should never stop doing. I encourage you to keep on telling what God has done for you.

It may be the most effective tool. You are not preaching at people. You are simply relating what the Lord has done for you and the joy and peace that he has brought to you in saving your soul.

It may be that we need to ask ourselves occasionally the question, When is the last time that I shared with someone else how God saved my soul? Has it been a week? Has it been a month? Has it been a year? We need to ask ourselves, Have I lost my desire to see those around about us come to know our blessed Savior? However, after we have done that a number of times and we say all the people that I know have heard my testimony, I would like to grow and have some other reason for giving a word of testimony or speaking regarding our blessed Lord. I think perhaps one of the opportunities that we have is to watch for current events that happen in our day that relate to the Bible. For there are people around about us who know very little about the Bible and when questions come up regarding the Bible they ask us, What does this mean? Can you explain to us what has happened? And I remind you that there is a verse in 1 Peter 3

which says, Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

God wants His children to be prepared, to be ready, to help those around about us who have questions regarding the Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus is a good example of that. In the 13th chapter of Luke's Gospel, He reminds them that something very disastrous has happened in their area.

A tower in Siloam happened to fall one day and crushed 18 men who lost their lives. And this was public knowledge, current events. And our Lord Jesus took advantage of it and said, I want to answer your question.

You are raising the question, Is it possible that these 18 men were the most wicked men in our city and God so arranged that that tower should fall at exactly the right moment when these 18 biggest sinners happened to be in the area? And our Lord Jesus answered the question, That is not the case. Your reasoning is human and it is not true. These were ordinary people, some perhaps saved, some perhaps not saved, but I want to remind you that if you do not repent, every one of you shall perish eventually.

He used that opportunity to present a Gospel message reminding them that every one of them were sinners in God's sight, no greater than the rest, but everyone needs to be saved regardless of their lifespan and their behavior. I think there are a number of occasions that we have seen people who were aroused with questions. I think back to 1947 when in the city of Durham there was something that excited a lot of people.

We had snake handlers coming into the city and the publicity was all over the city. And of course the city fathers said, We can't have this. This is not right.

We've got to stop it. We've got to keep people from getting hurt. And wherever you went, in grocery stores or wherever you met, you had people talking and taking sides.

One would say, I don't think the city fathers had a right to stop them. That's infringing upon religious liberty. Others said, I take sides with the city fathers.

I think they did the right thing. There'll be some innocent children who will be bitten by those snakes and I think they were right. And this was going back and forth.

The city was excited about it. You will remember that we put an ad in the paper with the title, Why We Do Not Handle Snakes. And we rented the auditorium across the street which had 900 seats in it.

And that Sunday night, the seats that were empty, 35 seats were empty, which meant we had 865 people present. Our Sunday night services up until that time perhaps were about 175 to 200. And immediately after that one service, it doubled.

Perhaps over 400 people were interested in this answer to our question. And it was a wonderful opportunity to tell them, we do not handle snakes to prove that we are Christians. We have something better.

We have the Word of God, which they didn't have in those early days when the scriptures were written and they had to revert to some other things. But in the day that we have the Word of God to tell us we're saved, we don't revert to handling snakes. And that satisfied a number of people.

I am still meeting some people who tell me they were either saved shortly after that, or they will say, that was the first time I attended services under the auspices of the Gospel Center. It was the beginning of an interest that was created. There are a number of other events that probably come across our pathway.

For instance, the Strode family has been in the news, at least in North Carolina. Was it in Marion, North Carolina, where the children were going to school and screaming at their classmates and at the teachers and telling them they're going to hell? That has been something that is in current events and people want to know. Is it right? Is that Strode family instructing their children properly? Should we all do that? Tell our children, don't be bashful.

Be bold. Tell them where they're going if they don't trust Christ. Well, from the Bible, I think we have to recognize that there is a balance of truth.

They were right in telling people that there is a hell. But, to do it in the way they did, they probably never won a soul to Christ. Our Bible balances that by saying, he that winneth souls is wise.

I really feel sorry for those children. I blame the parents. The children are not responsible.

The parents taught them. I want you to go out there and show your colors. Maybe even told them, you will not go to heaven if you are ashamed of Jesus Christ.

Don't be ashamed. Go out there and tell them. Be faithful.

And then you will get to heaven. Whatever the case may be, I do feel sorry for those children. I don't think they would do it if they were not urged by the parents to do it.

And I think the parents are absolutely wrong. Now, I remind you again that in many of these cases, there are some good things to be mentioned. For instance, the fact of reminding people that there is a hell at the end of a road of every Christ-rejecting sinner is biblical.

And we need to proclaim that. Just a few days ago, I met a young man who said, Our preacher has been there for ten years, and I have never yet heard him mention the word hell. Now, there is a possibility that overdoing it, I think perhaps in the Strode family, I think that is entirely overdone.

In the other case, a preacher never mentioning it, I think it is underdone. I think he is an unfaithful man if he doesn't somehow mention the fact of the results of turning down the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Well, the one that you have heard of just recently is, of course, Edgar Wisnett's book, *Eighty-Eight Reasons Why Jesus Christ Will Come During the Jewish Holidays in 1988*.

I'm always glad to see you at the services, but I'm especially glad to see you this morning. I didn't want to be the only one left behind when Jesus comes. So, misery loves company, and I love you more than ever because you, too, were left behind.

However, this must be analyzed, and it has given us a tremendous opportunity of reminding people what the Bible has to say regarding our blessed Savior coming back again. The Bible does state that Jesus Christ is coming back again, and I don't know of any portion of the Word of God that could be any clearer than the few verses that I've read to you. Isn't it amazing how God can pack into three verses, two verses really, the full details of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ? For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven.

The word himself is very important because he is not going to send a hired man or a John the Baptist or someone else. He is coming back himself. He is coming back as a bridegroom and coming for his bride.

Have you ever heard of a groom sending someone else to stand in as a proxy on the day of his wedding? I'm going to be there in person. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven. He's going to descend from heaven where he is and has been there since the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he's coming back descending from heaven with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up. That's the word rapture. The word rapture is not found in your Bible, but caught up illustrates the word rapture.

We'll be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. We cannot deny it. I stand alongside of Mr. Wisnett and say, good for you, you've reminded the world that Jesus Christ is coming back again.

So there's some good in it. In every case, there's some good perhaps in these things that are awakening communities. However, he went far too far when he set a definite date.

Did you notice anything that hinted to a date in these verses? A lot of details, but no date. And that's the message that we need to proclaim. And we need to negate the man who says at a certain time he will come back again.

He is not the only one who has predicted the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is something that happens frequently. In your history books, you will discover that some years ago in the early 1700s, a man by the name of Immanuel Swedenborg was a very highly educated man.

I suppose you would put him in the class with Albert Einstein. An exceptionally brilliant man and received a high office in the government of Sweden. He decided to leave his work one day and start a church.

He called the church the New Jerusalem Church. And he said, I have a special gift. I can communicate with dead people, my relatives.

I get wonderful information. And he got information telling us that Christ would come back and he set the date. He is gone now, and Jesus Christ did not come back again.

In 1814, in England, a lady by the name of Johanna Southcote also said, I have a revelation from God and I can tell you that Jesus Christ is coming back on October 14, 1914. And an estimated crowd of 100,000 people in England followed her and said, We are that new revelation. We follow this lady who has set the date for our Lord's return.

The day passed and immediately all of them vanished. Isn't it strange how losers go into hiding after their prediction doesn't come true? Have you noticed during a presidential election you will see bumper stickers, the man I'm voting for. As soon as the answer is received, the man is there, the losers run out to their garage and take off that sticker.

I don't want to be identified with the losers. Those who won, they leave their stickers on until they deteriorate by age. And Johanna Southcote had to go into hiding.

You never heard of her since. Coming closer home in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, which is very close to the New York border. My wife and I drove through there a few years ago and I was reminded of the fact.

This is the place where William Miller lived. In 1844, he predicted that Jesus Christ would come back again on October 22. And he had a number of followers also.

He called his church the Second Adventist Church. But of that day and hour knoweth no man. Know not the angels in heaven, but the Father only.

Verse 42. Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour our Lord doth come. Verse 44.

Therefore be ye ready in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. In chapter 25 of Matthew, verse 13. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

Over to Mark's Gospel, chapter 13. Mark's Gospel, chapter 13. There's a possibility that you would like to jot these verses down, if you have pencil and paper.

And you may be able to help someone, even now, who is asking, Why do you not believe that the date can be set? Mark's Gospel, chapter 13, and verse 32. What of that day and that hour knoweth no man. Know not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.

Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto you all, watch. Also in Acts, the first chapter of Acts, we have reference made to something else.

And by the way, regarding these events that we read in Matthew's Gospel, some of them refer to when he is coming with his saints, and also some when he is coming for his saints. In Acts chapter 1 and verse 7, or rather verse 6, When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. It is not for you to know.

That's the reason. Man is a strange being. If God keeps a secret, I've got to find out what that secret is.

Have you ever tried that? Just say to a person, I've got a secret. What is it? I can't tell you. Give me a hint.

Just give me a little hint so I can start to gossip. Give me a little hint. Please do.

I can't stand it. You must give me a hint. I've got to know.

God won't open his mouth. I'm going to keep it a secret. And God has a right to keep a secret.

He has never given us the slightest hint in his word when he is coming back again. However, that doesn't remove the fact that he's coming again. Someone has taken the time to search out and find that there are over 300 verses in the New Testament that speak of our Lord coming back again.

Either coming for his saints or coming with his saints. 300 verses, which means that one verse in every 25 verses in the New Testament continually tell us about our Lord Jesus Christ coming back again. We know

that he's coming suddenly.

We have that in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. We know that he's coming secretly, as a thief in the night. We know he's coming selectively.

That the world around about us will not know about it until after we have left. Only those who know him as Lord and Savior will be caught up when he comes again. And the last one is, surely I come quickly.

The last promise in your Bible, Revelation 22 and verse 20, the second last verse. Surely I come quickly. When Wisner said he's coming on the Jewish holidays, that wasn't quickly.

He broadcasted that for a long time. But our Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again. When we speak about the good things that may have happened, the opportunities we've had of sharing with people the truth that the Word of God gives on this subject, there are no doubt some bad things that also happen as a result of this propaganda.

Think for a moment of the scoffers that we read about in 1 Peter chapter 3, 2 Peter chapter 3. In the last days, scoffers shall come about. Say, where is the sign of his coming? You've been talking about his coming all these years. He hasn't come yet.

We conclude that it's all hogwash. There's nothing to it. Nothing to it.

And no doubt, the infidels have made a great day over this and said, Now we know that we are on safe ground. We don't believe anything that the Bible states. These people that say the Bible says so and so, we don't believe them anymore.

And they've put all of us in that category. And I think we need to, and we still have the opportunity of explaining to them why we were not excited because of the news. Because we were reasonably sure that our Lord Jesus Christ would not come back on that particular day to embarrass those who set the date and told about his coming again.

I think that each one of us this morning can be thankful that he didn't come back again. Does that sound strange? For you that are unsaved, you can be thankful. Because if he had come back, you would be a doomed soul.

There would be no one saying to you, except Jesus Christ as your Savior. That day has passed. God will send strong delusions and you will believe a lie.

But you cannot possibly be saved. And I remind you that Jesus Christ can come back again. Even today, the 25th day is just as good as any other day.

He is coming back. And what he does, if you are unsaved, you will be left behind and you will never be saved. Impossible.

Understand that. That's how serious it is to neglect God's wonderful way of salvation. I think too that those of us who are saved can also thank God that he didn't come back again.

If you will search your heart every time you say, I wish the Lord would come today, it's probably a selfish motive. Something that you want to get by without facing it. But remember, the Lord has given us the opportunity of leading souls to Christ.

Personally contacting people, telling them God's way of salvation. When he comes again, that will stop. You will never be able to lead a soul to Christ when you arrive in heaven.

I must remind you too that Mr. Wisnett has a lot of things to learn. He suggests, and this is true of all date-setters, they probably are wrong in a number of areas. Mr. Wisnett says that when Jesus Christ comes back again, all who claim to be Christians will go to heaven.

Then at the judgment seat of Christ, he will sort them out, and those that are not real will have to leave heaven and go to hell. Where did he find that in the Bible? I'm glad that that is not in the Bible. And you might explain that to people.

People will still be asking you the question, what about this noise of Jesus Christ coming back again? And we can assure them that the Bible still says he's coming again. However, we don't know the date, and it's good that we don't. It will keep us on our tiptoes and give us the opportunity of reaching souls for Christ.

In that third chapter of 2 Peter, he tells us perhaps the reason why he hasn't been back again. He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. Think of it this way.

The door has been opened. God's salvation is proclaimed to the ends of the earth. Souls are coming in from this nation, this place, this place.

A steady stream of souls coming in. How would our Father in heaven have the nerve to close that door when there's a stream of people coming in? It's his long-suffering, his love for souls that keeps him from coming. Although, the date has been set, and he will come on time.

It's good that you don't know. It's good that we Christians don't know. Let us be sure that we are doing our very best until he comes again.

Suppose he had returned on the Jewish holiday. I wonder if you had really been prepared, or would you have said, I really wanted to get a little more done before I went to heaven. I didn't take it quite as seriously as I should have.

May this awaken in our hearts a real desire to say, Lord Jesus, I want to thank you that your word still stands true, that you are coming back to receive us to yourself, and that we will be joined with the loved ones that have gone on before, and we shall be gathered in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. A wonderful prospect, a wonderful opportunity to make Christ known in these days when news regarding the Bible comes to the surface. Let us watch for opportunities, and let's not miss any opportunities, because they do want to know what the Bible says.

Not to your own opinion, they're not interested in that, but they do want to know what the Bible has to say about this wonderful subject. Just as our Lord Jesus came the first time, it was a surprise to many. Few were looking for him.

He is coming suddenly, and it could be before you leave this building. He will come and receive us to himself. To be ready is the most important thing, and to be busy as believers is also important.

In case there is someone here this morning, and you say, I have never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, I beg of you to take seriously the word of God, that there is coming a day when you will be doomed and cut off because you put it off too long. Do you have a good reason why you should remain unsaved? Do you

have a good reason for leaving this service without opening your heart to that loving Savior who died for you, who made provision for you? Do you have a good reason? I rather think you will have to answer, No, I don't. No, I don't.

Then why not, right where you are, this moment, Lord Jesus, I want to thank you for dying for me. I want to thank you for shedding your blood to cleanse me from my sins, and right here and now, I will do something I have never done before. I will accept your Son as my Lord and Savior.

The Bible says, Detweiler doesn't say it, the Bible says that if you do that, God will give you eternal life, and you can look with joy and say, I'm ready any moment if he should come again. I trust that I shall have the privilege of helping someone. I invite you, after the service, to walk to the front and simply say, I want this settled.

If there are questions that you have that need to be answered, I would love to take the Word of God and show you how it is possible for every person in this meeting to be ready when he comes again. Our gracious Father, we thank thee for the provision thou hast made in thy Word. We thank thee for the clear statements thou hast given us regarding the Savior's coming again.

We pray, our Father, this truth may grip the hearts of every person. As believers, help us, Lord, to live in the light of thy coming again at any moment. And we pray especially for lost ones in our meeting who have never seen the wisdom of trusting the Savior.

Give to them no rest and no peace until they open their heart and receive him and prepare for that great event. We give thee our thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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