

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of December 6, 2009
"He Is Coming!"**

[During Advent we are focusing on the coming of Jesus Christ. Today, we specifically want to focus on the "Second Coming."]

[Topics: Second Coming; Appearing; Parousia]

Excerpt: Today's message is called, "He Is Coming." Part of our Advent message is focusing on waiting for Christ or the coming of Christ expressed in different ways. Last week's message talked about how Jesus has come to live and dwell within us. But today's message is about his return as well.

Did you know that you only have 3 years and 6 days until the end of the world? That's what many, many people believe – that on December 21, 2012, the world is going to end. There are many web sites on the Internet that have clocks counting down the time. There's around 1125 days left.

People are actually planning their suicide the day before. Pastor Glen doesn't believe that's what the Bible had in mind concerning the return of Jesus.

When people think about the return of Christ, or the second coming or the "parousia", as some people call it, they think of many different horrible things that are going to happen all over the world. But few of us focus on the actual coming of Jesus. We tend to focus on the time frame as to when it's going to happen and the terrible events leading up to it.

One thing that Pastor is assured of – is that Jesus said, "No man knows the day or the hour, not even me." So, if Jesus as the Son of Man didn't know, there's a pretty good change that all these web sites don't know what they're talking about. So what did Jesus want us to focus on?

The end is near! For Candace Gunzeleman, it came last week. And it was the same for Glen McCutchan. That's about as near as you can get, isn't it? And for all of us the end is near. And for some of us, it's a littler nearer than for others.

And you can't go by our age either. This morning in Bible study, Larry Helscher told us that yesterday his 50 plus year old cousin was killed in an accident. 50-year-olds aren't supposed to die. But they do! And the end comes. And the next thing they know is that they are looking Jesus in the face. That will be their next experience. So the end has come for them.

The very idea that we can somehow figure out the time is unbiblical. That's not what God wants us to focus on. He wants us to focus on the waiting, the anticipation of meeting our Messiah. Last week's message showed that Jesus has already come to us and dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. He's available to mankind. He's all around us.

That's important for us to know before we think about him coming again, because so many people don't think Jesus is real now to us in this life. Technically, the Bible actually talks about Jesus' "second appearing" when it describes his "second coming." Now when Jesus appears again, he will be smiling and not have a huge frown on his face. Jesus is going to return in love and compassion and mercy, as we will see.

Let's read **Acts 1** beginning in **verse 9**. **"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10) They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11) 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'"**

The phrase "this same Jesus" means – this same human being that was standing beside you; the one you touched his hands and side and felt his scars; the one you ate fish with on the side of the lake, this same Jesus will reappear just like you saw him disappear into the clouds.

Now how do describe in English or Greek – going to the next dimension? When Jesus went from this earth into the next dimension where God is, how do you describe that? There was no word, so they described it as Jesus going behind the clouds. They didn't know that we have such things as dimensions back then.

And when Jesus returns, he will appear from the next dimension. He doesn't have to come from anywhere. He's already here with us. But he will be visible out of the next dimension in that he will appear before us.

Now Matt. 24 is primarily about the events that were going to happen between then and 70 AD concerning the destruction of the Temple. Jesus was telling his disciples not to focus on the things of this world, including this magnificent Temple, because all the stones would be pulled down. Jesus went on then to talk about his second appearing.

Matt. 24:30, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn." Why will the nations mourn? Well, when Jesus comes, the people, who were saying that they didn't believe in Jesus, suddenly find out that they were wrong. The whole world is going to say, "Oh no, we're sorry." They will be thinking that they should have lived better lives and not have done the things they did. They will automatically mourn. When Jesus shows up, they will feel convicted in their own heart, because of who he is.

"They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31) And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

Jesus said in **John 5**, that he would call their names out and they will rise out of their graves, both the righteous and those who didn't obey him and appear before him. The angels will be gathering all humanity from the grave or where ever their ashes have been spread. There will be an appearing before Jesus.

Now the early church believed the world would continue to have difficulties until the day Jesus returns in power and glory. Now, sadly, much of what they wrote has been turned into a “great horror story” and that seems to be what people call “Bible prophecy” and what they focus on!!

The important point is that Jesus is coming. But let’s not forget that he’s also already here. He’s already working in people’s lives. So we need to celebrate that as well as look for the fact that he’s going to appear the second time.

Now in **Rev. 1**, the various “names” of Jesus Christ are given. In **verse 4** we read, **Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come**, Jesus has already been known by this name. He called himself in the Gospels “**I am.**” After Jesus appears at his second coming in **Rev. 11**, he’s called “**He who was and is,**” because he no longer has to come again.

In **Rev. 1:5**, John lists the name “**Jesus Christ,**” because the one “**who is and was and is to come**” is the one who lived on the earth. Then John writes another name, “**the faithful witness.**” What has Jesus sent us out to do – to be witnesses? Other chapters then describe what it’s like when to be a faithful witness when you suffer persecution.

Do you want to know when the Book of Revelation means something to the people in China? It’s when the government shows up and arrests them in their church. They need to know how to be faithful witnesses when we’re being tortured for being Christians. So they need this book to help them know how to be faithful witnesses, because Jesus was a faithful witness when the religious leaders and the government came against him.

Continuing in **Rev. 1:5**, “**To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6) and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.**” Yes, Jesus has freed us from our sins and given us responsibilities.

7) "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be!"

Yes, Jesus is going to return. And it says that every eye will see him, even the dead ones who actually pierced him. Do you think those men who drove those nails into Jesus will mourn, when they come out of their graves and stand before him? Do you think they will be open and attentive? Pastor Glen thinks so.

When Jesus returns, he’s also going to give people ultimately rejoicing, because he’s the one who has forgiven their sins, and who is going to make them to be a kingdom and priests. But they are going to be full of mourning in the process, because they will realize who he is and what they’ve done in disobedience to him.

You know, God is big enough to let us go live our lives the way we want to and goof them up as much as we want to, because he still loves us. He still keeps giving us air to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat. God keeps drawing us along.

Now in **Matt. 16:27**, Jesus said that when he returns, he will reward those who serve him. He's going to give extra to those who really responded to him. And in **verse 28**, he said that some of you will see him in the kingdom before you die. And, indeed, three of the disciples did on the mount of transfiguration. When they were on that mountaintop, Jesus appeared to them in that other dimension, so they could see him in his partial glory. If it were his full glory, he would have fried them.

Now remember earlier we talked about the word translated "coming" is the word "appearing or presence." It's the Greek word *parousia*, which means the presence of Jesus. This means that Jesus will become visible again to us.

There were times in the Old Testament when God filled the Temple with his presence. The people called it the "shekinah glory." It says that the priest couldn't even work when the Temple was dedicated because the presence of God came into the Temple so strongly that couldn't do their duties any longer.

Jesus isn't hanging out there to return to fix our problems in the future. He sent the church now to help others. The members of the church, who are responding to him, are being used by Christ to impact the world today. And his presence is in us. And thus, his presence can be anywhere we are. And we can impact others as we spend time with them, as we relate to them, as many of us have.

Paul says we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and Jesus is working in us now, but we are also looking forward to a day when he becomes completely visible. And it says in **1 John** that we will see him as he is, because we will be like him. That means our flesh will be glorified. We will have gone into the next dimension.

Now the context of **1 Thess. 4** is that the bodies are in the grave, but the time will come when those bodies will be resurrected out of the tomb, and they will be revitalized and brought into glory.

16) "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven," Now this is from our perspective. But where is heaven? It's in another dimension. God is outside of time and space, which are created things. God isn't contained in his creation. Heaven is a dimension where God is.

"with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God," Now we as a church are pretty quiet. No one shouts out an "Amen." And loud voices tend to bother us. Now in Bible study this morning, it was Willie Edwards turn to read a Scripture and it was from Rev. 21. And he actually read it in a very loud voice that startled all of us. Now Willie has a fabulous voice and could do that.

You see angels are going to shouting when this great event happens. They've been waiting for millennia for this to happen. They've been doing a lot of things for God to help it happen.

"and the dead in Christ will rise first." And now there's going to be this huge resurrection when Jesus Christ returns. They are going to answer this loud voice.

People are going to come out of their graves. Who has died in Christ? In a sense it's everybody.

17) "After that, we who are still alive and are left will 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." And so we, who are alive, will transform into the next dimension. We meet Jesus where he is and we become like him. We will be glorified human beings as he is a glorified human being.

18) "Therefore encourage each other with these words." Yes, it should be an encouraging thing that we are looking forward to that day. But in the meantime, we are living every single day to be ready for that, because it might be us that has that accident on the way home. Or are told that we have just three months to live.

So it about us anticipating, always ready, always saying, "Lord Jesus, help me be like you." So, whenever it is or how ever it is, everything will be ok. If we're dead, it's ok. If we're still alive, it's ok, because our flesh will be glorified after your name is called.

Pastor Glen read a few excerpts from a book titled, Surprised by Hope, by Bishop N. T. Wright. He's writing about the return of Christ, the new heavens and the new earth. Now, he's not writing about us floating around in heaven with wings plucking a harp. We're not going to have any wings then than we do now. You're going to look like you just do now.

As soon as Jesus had been vindicated, raised and exalted, the church firmly believed and taught that he would return. "This same Jesus who has gone from you into heaven," said the angel to the disciples, "will return in the same way that you saw him go into heaven."

And though Acts doesn't often refer again to this belief, clearly the whole book takes place under this rubric. This is what the disciples are doing to make Jesus' lordship known in all the world against the day when he will come once more to renew all things.

But of course the primary witness is Paul. Paul's letters are full of the future coming or appearing of Jesus. His worldview, his theology, his theology, his missionary practice are all inconceivable without it. Yet what he has to say about this great event has often been misunderstood, not least by the proponents of rapture theology. It's almost time to address this directly ... (which he does later in his book).

Scholars and simple folk alike can get led astray by the use of a single word to refer to something when that word in its original setting means both more and less than the use to which it is subsequently put.

So what he is saying is that we have to go back and ask what does the word mean then and how is it used in Scripture. Yesterday at the conference over at Community Life Fellowship, Dan Rogers was talking about how the Greek word *sarx* is usually translated "flesh."

Paul writes that, "All flesh is sinful and cannot inherit the kingdom of God." And John writes that, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." So if they are using the

word sarx – “flesh” the same way, then that means Jesus was sinful and couldn’t inherit the kingdom of God. Obviously they are using the same word differently.

In this case the word in question is the Greek word parousia. This is usually translated “coming,” but literally it means “presence” – that is, presence as opposed to absence.

The word parousia had two lively means in non-Christian discourse at the time. The first meaning was the mysterious presence of a god or divinity, particularly when the power of this god was revealed in healing.

The second meaning emerges when a person of high rank makes a visit to a subject state, particularly when a king or emperor visits a colony or province. The word for such a visit is royal presence: in Greek, parousia.

Now suppose that Paul, and for that matter the rest of the early church, wanted to say two things. Suppose they wanted to say, first, that the Jesus they worshipped was near in spirit but absent in body but that one day he would be present in body and that then the whole world, themselves included, would know the sudden transforming power of that presence. A natural word to use for this would be parousia.

At the same time, suppose they wanted to say that the Jesus who had been raised from the dead and exalted to God’s right hand was the rightful Lord of the world, the true Emperor before whom all other emperors would shake in their shoes and bow their knees in fear and wonder.

And suppose that they wanted to say, that just as Caesar might one day visit a colony like Philippi or Thessalonica or Corinth (the normally absent but ruling emperor appearing and ruling in person), so the ruling but absent Lord of the world would one day appear and rule in person within this world, with all the consequences that would result. Again, the natural word to use for this would be parousia. (Pages 128 - 130)

In other words the royal presence of Jesus Christ is suddenly visible. It’s not that he’s been gone somewhere, it’s just the glorified flesh part of him is not yet visible. But there’s a moment coming when he’s going to appear. He’s been here spiritually already. He’s already been emperor and king. But now he’s going to show up.

And so when they’re talking about, in the New Testament, his coming, it’s about Jesus manifesting about what he’s already been doing through the Holy Spirit. It’s easy to get those two divided.

Sometimes many Christians will say that they hope Jesus will return soon to fix all these things. Well, yes he’s going to do that. But part of what he’s doing is fixing it now through the church. Part of the way he’s doing that is fixing it through scientists who are finding better ways to do things.

Part of the way he’s doing that is through professors in universities learning more about the universe. Part of the way he’s fixing it is through other people in our culture who may not even believe in Jesus. But he’s put into them the creativity that they are finding better ways for us to live on this earth.

Jesus is working in the world today! But he's not yet visible. But he's going to appear one day. So we live right now in the already but not yet. That tension of Jesus is already here and yet he's not yet returned. He's not yet visible. He's not yet fully in charge, making himself known to everybody.

So we have that conundrum to live with – he's not here, but he's coming. So we live as though he's here because he is in spirit. But we also live in anticipation of the day that he will fully take over.

But we need to understand that the church is the body of Jesus Christ on this earth. We represent the kingdom of God on this earth. God expects us to be living on behalf of Jesus today. He expects us to be making a difference in our area. He expects us to be looking after our environment. He expects us to be looking after the people around us as though he were here.

One of the ways he is changing the earth is what he's doing through us. And he invites us to be a part of that.

Finally in **1 Cor. 1:7**, Paul writes, "**Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.**" Pastor Glen hopes that we eagerly are waiting for the second coming – for the time when Jesus appears again. But we need to understand that he's already here. It's going to be a time when he becomes visible – when suddenly the sky opens and the Son of God will be exposed for all to see. He's come out of that dimension so we can see him.

And he will be the King of kings and will be here with us forever. And you'll always be able to see Jesus from that point in time on. He won't be somewhere else – he will be with men. And we will be like him and be participating with him.

We don't know what happens then. The Bible gets us up to Jesus' return and then gives us little glimpses and that's it. From then on, we have no idea what happens. But we know it's going to be glorious and bigger than we can possibly imagine.

Now we have an opportunity today to come to the table of the Lord. We are calling it the Eucharist, because that's what the early church called it. And it meant "thanksgiving." It also means "communion" as all of us come together to one table. It reminds us that Jesus is flesh. He's glorified flesh, but he's flesh.

And the bread represents that he had a broken body. And he also had blood that kept him alive. But in the glorified body it's not blood that keeps you alive, it's the Spirit of God. So, when Jesus was resurrected he didn't have blood any more. It was the life of God that gave him life.

And that's what will happen to us. Blood is our life now. That's why the Bible is very clear about not eating blood because that's the life of man. It's the life of animals. But eventually the life of man will be the Spirit of God.

Pastor Glen had encouraged Glen and his wife Barbara to take communion every Sunday night, because it is a way to see Jesus. And Glen went to his grave with peace in his heart and a smile on his face, if he could have done that.

We should be joyous when we take the Eucharist. We are coming to the thanksgiving table celebrating the return of Jesus as a glorified human being – as God and man. And he's going to bring us as human beings into that realm with him.

Key Scripture: Rev. 1:7, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen."

General Group Question: Please explain what the Greek word *parousia* means and how it applies to Jesus return to the earth.

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. Can we accurately predict when Jesus will return to this earth? Why or why not?
2. According to Matthew 24 and Rev. 1, what happens to believers when Jesus returns?
3. Why will many mourn when Jesus returns? Why will their mourning for most eventually turn to joy?
4. Why should believers be encouraged when Jesus returns?
5. What is the main point that Bishop Wright is trying to get across in the excerpt about *parousia* that was read?
6. How is Jesus working in the world today? What is he accomplishing?
7. How can Jesus be present in the world today and yet make his appearance in the future?