

Other Studies Are Available at www.DrNichols.org

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Ed Nichols

Copyright © 1998 by Ed Nichols

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Several factors contribute to a belief in the return of Christ. Some of these facts are the predictability of the return, Christ's appearing, personal presence, unveiling revelation, Scriptural declaration, Christ's statements, the meaning of death, a changed state of being, unfulfilled prophecy, the coming for and with the saints, a great theme of the Bible, predicted by many, and last message in the Bible. Believing in these truths should be reflected in one's attitude and the way that he lives.

Attitude

John 14.3 predicts the return of Christ. Jesus said "I will come again." This knowledge of Jesus return should affect one's belief. Believers should remain watchful for the event. This event, His appearing is known as the Epiphaneia, and is spoken of in 1 Thes 4.16-17 where it states that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven" and "we . . . shall be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air." His personal presence, known as Parousia, should cause one to live a life of purity and holiness as spoken of in 2 Pet 3.10-11 and in 1 John 3.3. The Scriptures state that at the moment of His personal presence (Parousia), something mysterious happens to the believer. This mystery is his transformation from this earth. It is that moment when absence ceases and presence begins. It is the absence from this world and the life we know to the presence and beginning of a life with Christ.

The unveiling revelation (Apokalupsis) or "the visibility of the Lord's return."¹ as mentioned in 2 Thes 1.7 should cause one to become prayerful. This Scripture is plain: "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" 2 Thes 1.7.

The infallibility of the inerrant Word gives an attitude of belief in what the Scriptures have to say about the return of Christ. The return is mentioned a multitude of times in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. These cases which mention His return should be considered in light of 2 Pet 3.14 which states "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." This Scripture should cause one's attitude to be always diligent in his expectation of His return. According to Matt 24.44 one should be ready for Christ's return. It states, "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

The belief in the eminent return of Christ is reflected in one's attitude concerning death. According to 1 Cor 15.51-53, everyone shall be changed from whatever state he is in, to a state of

¹Mark G. Cambron, Bible Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 266.

change. Accordingly, the Scripture states "we will all be changed." 1 Cor 15.51. The attitude toward the assurance that death is not the end of life should cause one to turn to God from the world and to serve Him. This service or usefulness as mentioned in 1 Thes 1.9-10 is expected of the believer. Death is not the coming of Christ according to the Scriptures. Death is merely a state of being. The miracle revealed to man is that Christ's return will cause a changed state of being, dead or alive, we who are in Christ "will be changed" and made sinless according to 1 Cor 15.51-53.

One should be aware of the already fulfilled prophecies concerning Christ. Likewise, one should note that many of the remaining "unfulfilled prophecies" predict Christ's return. The prophecies discuss Christ's two separate appearances. The first appearance, the rapture, Christ will be coming for His saints, and the next occurrence, or the return, Christ will be coming with His saints. Chafer "it is reasonable as well as honoring to God to believe that it will be fulfilled in the same faithfulness which has characterized all His works to the present hour."²

Given the faithfulness and character of God, one can easily believe in Christ returning. The returning is one of the great themes in Scriptures. It is the subject of the first prediction which is found in Jude 14,15 and is the last message found in the Bible. (Rev 22.20). In addition to the first prediction of Jude and the last message in the Bible, several predictions of Christ second coming are given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John. These predictions should bring one to the realization that James expressed in Jam 5.8 when he said, "be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."

The Way One Lives

The Bible is clear that Christ is returning. He is coming again. Realizing the imminent return should affect one's life and ministry. The ministry of every Christian is the responsibility to Christ to make Him known to the lost. Christians should take every opportunity to make known Christ return. Believers must serve Him in such a way that others may know Christ and be prepared for His return.

Christ's return is personal and needs to affect the way one lives. Each individual must stay alert and responsive to the will of God. The necessary preparations need to be made that all might be ready for eternity and His return. Knowing of His imminent return answers all questions and should strengthen hope in, and heighten anticipation of Christ return. One should cling to the realization that Rom 8.35-39 is saying that between Christ and the believer there is a relationship which nothing can break.

A serious look at 1 Thes 4 should make one aware of how he should live his life in light of Christ's return. Verses 2 and 3

²Lewis Sperry Chafer, Major Bible Themes, (Grand Rapids: Academic, 1974), 76.

admonish believers to live a life of preparedness. They should live a life of faith and love as discussed in verse 8. In verses 11-15 one sees that lives should be that of mutual support and help to others. One's life will show joy evermore as noted in verse 16. Verse 17 says pray without ceasing, given the knowledge of His return. That prayer may be a prayer of gratitude or thanksgiving which is mentioned in verse 18. Living a life of spiritual freedom should be the aim as noted in verse 19. In light of all the prophesying in the Holy Scriptures, one should live a life open to God's word. One should live a life of discernment and a life which is free from even the appearances of evil which is clearly stated in verses 20-22.

Knowing what is known should cause Christians to make every effort to win people to Christ. This soul winning knowledge should be a way of life. Obviously, knowing God and His Word, Christians can stand firm on the teachings that He is returning. The return should encourage readiness for Him. It should encourage godliness. It should encourage service.

Believing in the return of Christ should affect one's life and ministry and be summed up in that his life and conduct should reflect that of a child of God. One needs to live like he believes the return of Christ will take place soon. One should keep in mind that the Scriptures never lie and that one should look at himself critically. One's ministry should be to preach His message, not a social message. One should preach a message which will consistently demonstrate his belief to a lost world that Jesus Christ is coming again and that His return really does affect his life and ministry.

Ed Nichols a retired university administrator, is an author, teacher and pastor. Nichols holds two earned doctorates. His degrees include a Doctor of Ministry from Luther Rice Seminary, Doctor of Philosophy from Saint Louis University, Master of Education and Bachelor of Arts from University of Missouri at St. Louis

Other writings;

Discipleship: An Evangelistic Approach.

The Decree of God.

The Deity of Christ.

Personality of the Holy Spirit.

The Ministry of Angels.

The Creation and Fall of Man.

The Dilemma of Sin.

Salvation and Security.

The Church.

End Times or Last Things.

Systematic Theology Synopses.

The Birth of Christ.

Church History AD 31 to AD 1517.

Church History AD 1517 to 20th Century.

Evangelism Then and Now.

Selected Methods of Expository Preaching.

Personal Evangelism.

How to Claim a Victorious Christian Life.

Church Staff Administration.

Brief Studies in the Old Testament.

The Old Man and Flesh.

The Return of Christ.

The Right Foundation.

Dispensational Perspective.

Biblical Inerrancy.

Evangelism Program: From Policy to Procedure.

Pastoral Placement Process.

A Study of Philippians.

A Pastor's Calendar.

The Sinless Christ.