

THE REST OF THE STORY – JESUS IS COMING AGAIN!
HEBREWS 9:23-28

INTRODUCTION:

The life of Jesus, the Christ, has its earthly beginning in Bethlehem about 4BC. In fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies Mary, a peasant girl from Nazareth, accompanied by her husband, gave birth to her first born son in a place used to keep cattle in the little town of Bethlehem.

The child born to Mary that night worked as a young man in the carpenter shop of Joseph. Other sons and daughters were born to Mary and became a part of that special family in Nazareth. Evidently Joseph was taken from the family in an early death and this left Jesus as the oldest male member of the family. When He was 30 years old He went to the Jordan River and was baptized by John, the Baptist. This launched him into three and a half years of an intense teaching ministry across Galilee and Judah. These years were marked by unusual blessing upon everything that He did. He taught as no man had ever taught. He healed all manner of diseases. He provided for the needs of people even with miraculous means. He even raised persons from the dead and restored them to their families.

At the close of this three and half years of intense ministry, He was arrested in Jerusalem during the Passover Season. He was given a hasty and ill-advised trial, and was condemned by the highest court in Israel to be put to death. The Roman governor of that day, Pilot, gave his consent to the crucifixion of Jesus and it was carried out by members of the Roman army stationed in Jerusalem. His body was placed in a tomb borrowed from an influential man of Israel, Joseph of Arimathea. On the third day after His burial He was raised from the dead on

Sunday morning. He spent the next forty days appearing to His disciples in different places and at different times to confirm to them that He was indeed raised from the dead. At the close of those forty days before the eyes of His waiting disciples He was lifted up from the earth and caught away in a cloud and carried out of their sight. With that the earthly life of the Lord Jesus was completed. You might conclude that that was the end of the life and the story of Jesus of Nazareth. But you would be mistaken. There is the rest of the story.

You do not have the whole story unless you include the anticipation of his return to the earth a second time. In 318 different references in the New Testament you have a specific promise that Jesus Christ will come to the earth a second time. It is found in a number of places in the Old Testament. This is a part of the Christmas event that we sometimes forget. As you celebrate the birth of Jesus, or as we call it on occasion, the advent of the Christ – you need to remember that there will be a second advent. Jesus is coming to earth again!

I. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS SECOND ADVENT.

The certainty of the second advent is based upon two important realities:

1. His faithfulness to His promises.

The first advent was a fulfillment of specific Old Testament prophecies. The first of these were given by God in the Garden of Eden to the first man and woman when He promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. As the centuries went by the prophecies became clearer and even more specific. Isaiah prophesied that the promised Messiah would be

born of a virgin. His contemporary Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. A number of others specific details were added as God encouraged His people to anticipate the first advent. At the set time Christ was born of the virgin in Bethlehem in fulfillment of God's prophecies. The same God who fulfilled the words of the prophets in the first advent will fulfill the words of the prophets in his second advent. Many of those old Testament Prophets not only spoke of the first advent, they had visions of the second as well. This portion of their prophecies is yet waiting to be fulfilled.

What is even more compelling is that Jesus Himself promised a second return. He said to His disciples on the night before His death, "I will come again and receive you unto myself." A number of His parables can be understood only if you accept them as a promise that he will come again. One of his last discourses with His disciples which is included in the synoptic gospels has as its basic theme this second coming of Jesus our Lord.

Why should we believe anything that Jesus said if we do not believe what He said about His second advent? Why should we trust God for anything if we cannot trust Him to keep the promises that He gave concerning the second advent of Jesus? This certainty of our Lord's coming is rooted in the faithfulness of our Lord and His father to keep the promise that has been made.

2. His faithfulness to His purpose.

The first advent was directly related to the saving purpose of God. The new born babe was given the name Jesus because it meant God saves. From the very beginning it was made known that the mission of this new born babe was to save His people from their sins.

All of the purpose of God was not fulfilled at the first advent. The completion of God's saving purpose demands a second advent. Something would be eternally missing if Jesus Christ did not return to the earth again. So as we come to this Christmas season to celebrate what God did in the giving of His son 2000 years ago, let us look forward with keen anticipation to what God will do in the future. There is as much certainty about the second advent as there is in the historicity of the first advent.

II. THE MISSION OF HIS SECOND ADVENT.

This brings us to a point where we become aware of the contrast between the two comings. The first coming prepared for the second advent. Christmas was essential so that there could be the second advent.

Time will prohibit the exploration of the mission of the second advent fully, but we can be suggestive in these moments.

1. The revelation of His glory.

When He was born of the virgin in Bethlehem, a part of His mission was the revelation of His father. In order to accomplish the mission that He had received from the Father, He laid aside His glory as the Eternal Son of God. When you looked into the face of the new born babe lying

in the bosom of Mary, there was nothing to indicate that this child was the incarnation of God.

In every way He looked like a normal new-born Jewish boy. This was true throughout the days of His ministry. Through Him the Father was revealed. This was to the extent that Jesus could say to Phillip “He that has seen me has seen the Father.”

His mission in the second advent will be to reveal His glory to the human family that rejected Him as the Son of God. In the opening of the revelation that John received on the isle of Patmos we have these words that let us know something about His mission, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, amen!” (Rev. 1:7). The clouds that are to accompany His second advent are clouds of glory. There were no such clouds when He appeared the first time, but the second time His glory as the Son of God to be revealed.

In His second letter to the Thessalonian Church the Apostle Paul states this same glorious reality very dramatically when he writes, “And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. 1:7-8). Here the Apostle tells us that “He will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.” It is true that angelic choir sang for the shepherds on that Christmas eve outside of the town of Bethlehem but as far as we know no angels made an appearance in the little cave where the baby was born. At the second advent the glorified Son of God will descend from the heavens toward the earth and in that moment of descent He will be accompanied by a multitude of angels. This will be only one of the manifestations of His glory as the Son of God.

After 2,000 years there is still a lot of debate about the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. There is still a consensus among the unbelieving citizens of this world that Jesus is not worthy of glory. But into history He will come in His second advent to reveal His glory when the citizens of this planet see His glory at His second coming, they will mourn because of the terrible error in judgment that they have made.

2. The destruction of His enemies.

When He came the first time many were confused about His mission. They expected Him to take judgment upon His enemies in His first appearing. They knew that there were many prophecies that looked forward to a day when the enemies of God would be judged finally and conclusively. They were quite disappointed when Jesus failed to call down judgment upon His enemies. Instead during His earthly ministry He reached out to those who were His enemies. He opened the door to salvation in love to those that were His enemies.

The second advent will be different. Paul described it to the Thessalonians as being a moment in which He will “in flaming fire take vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The book of the Revelation has as one of its basic themes the judgment that our Lord will pour out upon His enemies at His second coming. As we look at this evil world around us, we need to remember that Jesus is coming. When He comes in His second advent He will judge the evil and the evil one that has dominated this age. He is coming as judge to take vengeance upon those who have set their heart against God and His Son the Lord Jesus.

3. The Salvation of His people.

In His first coming which began that Christmas His mission was to take away the sins of His people. That mission was accomplished when He died on the cross at Jerusalem. The writer of Hebrews looks beyond that to the mission that is to be fulfilled in His second advent. “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear the second time apart from sin for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). It is best to understand the expression “apart from sin” as meaning a part from “sin offering.” He will not come to the earth to be a sin offering for His people ever again. This is not necessary since by that one offering He did all that was necessary to deliver His people from their sins.

What does the writer mean then concerning “the salvation?” While it is true that He saved us from our sins in His first coming, there is something yet to be fulfilled and completed. In His second appearance He will consummate the salvation that was purchased at Calvary. The consummation of this salvation will include the resurrection of the bodies of those who have died in the Lord. They will be raised with a body like unto His glorious body at the moment of His second appearance. It will mean the translation and transformation of those believers who are alive at the moment of His coming. In that moment they, too, will receive a new body free from corruption and mortality that will enable them to enter into a blessed eternity with Him. The consummation of their salvation will mean that they will at last be away from the presence of Satan and sin. They will in that moment be allowed to enter in to the eternal joy of their Lord.

When Jesus came the first time His mission was fully accomplished. In His second advent we have every reason to believe that His mission will be completely accomplished.

Unfortunately when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in spite of all the prophecies that God had given across the centuries, the people of Israel were almost totally unprepared for His coming. Besides Mary and Joseph who had been prepared by an angelic visitor to fulfill their part in the accomplishment of His coming, you find only a few that had their hearts ready. There was one aged man who lived around the temple in Jerusalem looking for the day when the Messiah would make His appearance. This man Simeon was there to greet Mary when she brought the baby Jesus to fulfill the law concerning his birth. Close beside Simeon was a little widow who had spent most of her life around the temple waiting for the Messiah. Anna was there to rejoice when Jesus was brought into the temple in the arms of His mother.

If Jesus was to make His appearance in the heavens today, would He catch you by surprise? Would you be ready to welcome Him? Would your life be in readiness to meet Him in the air? The word that the writer of Hebrews uses “Those who eagerly wait for Him” means just that. This is to be the attitude of the children of God in this age. We celebrate with joy the first advent and at the same moment should anticipate with joy the second advent. Indeed as we thank God for the first advent, we should in the same moment be praying, “Even so come quickly Lord Jesus.” Let me encourage you to spend some time during this Christmas season meditating on and building expectancy in your heart for the second advent of our Lord. If there is anything in your life that needs to be altered, or any task that needs to be done, before Jesus comes, then be about it today!