

## Jesus is Coming, Ready or Not!

### Introduction:

All of us have probably played the game “hide and seek” as children and possibly as adults with children in our family network.

You remember how it works: someone hides their face and counts to 10 or some other agreed number while the others all go and hide, hoping not to be found. Then the person who has to find the others calls out in a loud voice *coming, ready or not*. Then the game begins as he or she tries to find the others.

Much of the New Testament encourages us to prepare for and to be ready for the final return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul’s two letters to the church at Thessalonica deal with this important issue. Our Epistle today from 2 Thessalonians 2 begins in such a way as to leave us in no doubt: *Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him we ask you not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.*

In his previous letter to this church Paul writes: *We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.* He then goes on to speak about the Lord’s return.

Ignorance about somethings doesn’t really matter but ignorance about the return of Christ is a matter to be rectified by understanding what God tells us in His Word.

As we look at 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2, we find three important facts which are worth exploring:

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### 1. JESUS' RETURN HAS NOT YET TAKEN PLACE. (Verses 1-12)

In every age there are people who spread the lie that Jesus has already returned: It was so in the first century when the Thessalonians were being told by false teachers that Jesus had already returned.

The Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus returned in 1874.

The Seventh Day Adventists say that he came in 1844.

Paul was anxious to warn his readers to be on their guard and to stick to what the Bible says. He then explained in verses 3-12 why it would be impossible for Jesus to have come back already.

We can be confident that Jesus has not yet returned.

### 2. JESUS' RETURN IS AN ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY.

In 1789 the then President of the USA, Benjamin Franklin included these words in a famous speech about the new U.S. constitution: *In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.*

We know that those two certainties are true. But Christians are certain about many things about God, including the fact that Jesus will return.

Paul writes with certainty about Jesus' return and he was God's spokesperson. To the Corinthians he wrote: *for I received from the Lord what I passed on to you.* Jesus often spoke about His return as did The Apostles Peter and John.

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This is great news for Christians who look forward to that day knowing that they will be with the Lord forever.

But for those who are not yet Christians it is very bad news, as Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. (Please read these verses)

### 3. JESUS' CERTAIN RETURN SHOULD AFFECT THE WAY THAT WE LIVE. (Verses 13-17)

In particular, Paul gives two important things that we should be doing as we wait for Jesus' return:

Firstly, he says: *stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you.* We are to *stand firm* against false teaching about God and Jesus. False teachers were prevalent in the early church and they are in the church today, some with influential positions of leadership. The Letters of Peter and John give great emphasis to being on our guard against the wrong teaching that undermines God's revealed truth as found in the Bible.

Paul in his letters is also concerned that the *teachings we passed on to you* would be undermined by *fine sounding arguments*. False teachers exist in every Christian denomination, including the Anglican Church.

That's why it is so important that we are regularly reading our Bibles and being regularly taught from the Bible. Only then will we know what God says and be able to recognise false teaching and with God's help and the encouragement of other Christians be able to stand firm on the truth.

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The second thing that Paul says that we should be doing as we wait for Jesus' return is found in verse 17 where he prays that the Thessalonians will be encouraged and strengthened by God in *every good deed and word*. What a great prayer!

*Good deeds* arise out of our love for God. While good works or good deeds can never earn us Salvation, God's love, mercy and grace towards us in Jesus Christ should motivate us to obey Him and seek to do what is good. The Apostle James puts the right emphasis on faith and works in James 2:14-26, with his statement that *faith without works is dead*.

### Conclusion:

We've been reminded today of the consistent message of the Bible that Jesus is coming back as the judge of all. We've noted that:

- Jesus' return has not yet taken place
- Jesus' return is an absolute certainty
- Jesus' return should affect the way that we live, particularly in standing firm on God's truth and as we seek to do good.

May God help us to be ready; for Jesus is coming, ready or not!