

Heidelberg Catechism 52–Jesus: His Return and Judgment–Part 2

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Last week you heard *why Jesus will return*. He will return to comfort his people. You also heard *when Jesus will return*. He will return at an unknown date. Today we will go further into eschatology 末世论 and hear what the Messiah's return will look like and what events will take place when he returns.

Our headings are: What Will Messiah's Return Look Like, What Will Messiah's Judgment Look like, and What must I be Looking at Right Now.

Our goals are: That you will live your life with hope and without fear and wait for Jesus to bring justice on his enemies.

52 q. How does Christ's return "to judge the living and the dead" comfort you?

A. In all my distress and persecution I turn my eyes to the heavens and confidently await as judge the very One who has already stood trial in my place before God and so has removed the whole curse from me. All his enemies and mine he will condemn to everlasting punishment; but me and all his chosen ones he will take along with him into the joy and the glory of heaven.

What will Messiah's return look like?

1. What will Jesus Christ's return look like? Will there be a secret rapture or will everyone see him when he returns? Will he go away and leave everyone in the world for 7 years and then return afterwards and set up his throne in Jerusalem and then rule the world for 1000 years? That sounds quite interesting, doesn't it? Many people believe that will happen in the end. In exegesis (method of explaining the Bible) you must let the clear passages interpret the unclear passages.

2. So let's look at one of the clearest passages that teaches what Jesus' coming will look like. (I hope you remember from last week that you must be aware of some of the false signs of Jesus' return that are often quoted from the first 34 verses of Matthew 24. Listen to the sermon if you weren't here.)

1Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the **Lord Himself will descend from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the trumpet of God**. And the **dead in Christ will rise** first. 17 Then we who are alive and **remain shall be caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we **shall always be with the Lord**. 18 Therefore **comfort one another** with these words.

Paul was taught by the Lord. So what he spoke about the end of the world wasn't a fantasy of his...or a desire of his...but the authoritative truth from God. Here is the order of the events.

- The Lord Jesus will descend with a loud shout from the archangel.** (This same Jesus will return in like manner.)
- The Archangel will loudly blow the trumpet of God – so loud that the world will hear.**
- The dead in Christ will be raised up and caught up** to meet the Lord in the air.
- The living in Christ will be caught up** to meet the Lord in the air...
- We will always be with the Lord.** There is no more returning to earth...which is especially clear when you join it with John 14, where Jesus said he will come and take you to be with him, that where he is there you would be also.

3. But there are other things to note here other than the order of events.

a. Jesus coming will be glorious. Consider the brilliant 辉煌 scene of angels, bright light, trumpets being blown, and the Lamb of God sitting in the clouds of heavens! The lights at his birth will be increased many times.

b. When Jesus returns your body will be changed to an incorruptible eternal body -a body that does not age or feel pain. (This is why when people misuse the signs of Matthew 24, that in the last days you must not go back to your house for clothes, it makes no sense.) No one will need earthly clothes at the end of the world.

1Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, **but we shall all be changed—52 in a moment**, in the twinkling of an eye 眨眼 at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 **So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

4. Jesus' coming will be public. The world will behold him when he comes with his angels. So he will come suddenly, like a thief...and like the rain in Noah's Day, and visibly, which will bring joy to the Christian and terror 恐惧 to the non-Christian.

2Thessalonians 1:5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation 困苦 those who trouble you, 7 and to **give you who are troubled rest** with us when the Lord **Jesus is revealed from heaven** with His mighty angels,

5. Jesus' coming will give comfort to his people. How will this be a comfort to God's people? Because Jesus is certainly coming to take you to be with him in heaven forever, you can confidently wait for him to return. This is a blessed hope. Imagine how this is a comfort for those who have suffered long in sickness, maybe bodies ravished 夺去 by cancer, or those who struggle with depression— knowing they will get new bodies and renewed souls. Imagine how this must comfort those who have fought with sin, and are frustrated 受挫 and lost so many times! Imagine how this must give comfort for those who have been persecuted – knowing that it will end...and that all that they do for Christ will be rewarded.

What will Messiah's Judgment look like

1. The wicked ones – dead or alive- who persecuted Jesus or otherwise rejected him will be destroyed... convicted 定罪 and condemned to everlasting death in hell and its fires.

2Thessalonians 1:7...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 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. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

2. How will this take place? The Lord explained the nature of his judgment on the wicked. He will sit on his Great White Throne and show wicked men their faults on Judgment Day. He will have a full record of every sin of thought, words, and actions. Because of this full accounting, no wicked person will be able to claim that his judgment is unfair. He will then face an irrevocable 不可撤销的 damnation. Let's read...this is a long passage but it really makes the point clear.

Matthew 25:1 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will **sit on the throne** of His glory. 32 "**All the nations will be gathered before Him**, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. **41** "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' 44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 "**And these will go away into everlasting punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life."

Notice here that no one will escape. All the nations will have to appear before him. Those who reject God in this life and those who in this life deny that he exists will still have to stand before him in judgment. Every knee will bow...

3. The godly – dead or alive –he will take with him to heaven to enjoy all its joys and glory. You've already seen this from 1Thessalonians 4. You will forever be with the Lord. One pastor wrote: "There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Jesus is the Judge and His robes still bear the bloody stains of the death of redemption and resurrection of reconciliation." His presence will confirm that you are freed from sin and will enter into eternal life.

Matthew 25:34 "Then the King will say to **those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:** 35 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "And the King will answer and say to them, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these [My brethren], you did it to Me.**'

This flows to the next sub-point.

4. You will be rewarded in heaven according to your deeds. Jesus said you should store up your riches (your rewards for good works – like caring for the needy and defending the weak) in heaven. So not all Christians will have the same rewards. (Good economic principle for this life.) Every Christian will go to heaven, but not every Christian will enjoy the same degree of blessings.

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

How well are you storing up for heaven?

What must I be looking at Now?

1. Look to God's Word and his Spirit. These 2 go together. When you read and meditate on God's Words, ask God for his Holy Spirit to motivate you to trust him and wait for the time when he will judge the wicked and the good -separate the goats from the sheep at the end of the world- and reward you in the end.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue 独揽 all things to Himself.

2. Look at the tasks God has given to you now and ask for this Word and Spirit to work in you in this area also. You have other work to do now and his Word and Spirit will help you to live for him. The end of your groaning in sin will come. God is not behind schedule. But if you get preoccupied with heaven and judgment you will not be able to fulfill all your duties now.

Conclusion:

If the Bible does not say something will happen after he returns, don't guess. Look at what the Bible does say: Christ will return in the clouds for living and dead believers, take them to heaven, and reward them according to their good works. He will judge the wicked fairly – with evidence in front of them- and send them to hell. This is a comfort to you. You won't lose and the wicked won't escape.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Are you afraid when you think of the economic situation in the world? Are you afraid when you fly? Are you jealous when you see the wicked thrive? Here is the problem with that. **If you allow yourself to be harmed by thinking this way, you will change the way you live.** You will be self-protecting – you will start hugging yourself. You will not invest in the real future – a future in heaven. You will only think of this life and accumulating 积累 stuff for when you will not have. You will only think of paying bills. But your heart must go much farther than that. **Only if you fully trust in Christ in his promise to return for you will you be able to do that.**

Finally, where will your train stop? If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior you are safe. If you don't, you will be damned. That's it. There is no 3rd option. Choose the right one.