

Belgic Confession 37 – The End of the World – Part 1

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: “Eschatology 末世” means “the study of last things.” This is the subject of this last article. Now the Bible does not speak in too much detail about the end times. And there is a good reason God doesn’t speak too much about it. God **does not want man to become preoccupied** with eschatological events since man has work to do now. Our Lord said that you must “occupy” – be busy – until he comes. Yet, God does say some things about “end times” matters. Why? God **does not want his people to be totally ignorant of this matter** because he knows that this doctrine is necessary for your present comfort. You see, whether your persecution 迫害 is subtle, as in Canada, or terrible, as in Moslem or Communist countries, if you know the joys that are ahead, they would give much comfort and encouragement for you to face persecution and difficulties now. So hear what God has to say concerning the end times. In this 1st sermon you will hear about the **order of the events on the end times**.

Our headings are:

When will Christ come

What will happen on earth when Christ Comes?

What will happen in heaven when Christ Comes?

Our goals are: **That you will properly understand what the Bible teaches about the last times** so you and your family can **find comfort in persecution and be encouraged to faithfully serve** the Lord.

Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, when **the time appointed by the Lord** (which is unknown to all creatures) is come and the number of the **elect complete**, that our Lord **Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly**, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare Himself **Judge of the living and the dead**, burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it.

Then all **men will personally appear** before this great Judge, both men and women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, being summoned by the voice of the archangel 天使, and by the sound of the trumpet of God, **For all the dead shall be raised** out of the earth, and their **souls joined and united with their proper bodies** in which they formerly lived. As for those who shall then be living, they shall not die as the others, **but be changed in the twinkling of an eye**, and from **corruptible become incorruptible**.

When Will Jesus Christ Come

1. Christ will return in the air at a time appointed by his Father – not one day sooner or later. And know for certain that he will come back. You can count on it. He said so.

John 14:2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** "And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also.

2. But no one knows – not a single man or woman knows - when Christ will return. It is contemptible 可鄙 to think one knows

when Christ will return. Those who pretend to know are either deceivers, 骗子 like Jim Jones did to the people in the jungles of Guyana in 1978, taking away their wealth and killing 918 of them, or they are themselves deceived -

misunderstanding the Scriptures 圣经. The Scriptures are clear.

Matthew 24: 42-44 "Watch therefore, for **you do not know** what hour your Lord is coming. **43** "But know this, that **if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched** and not allowed his house to be broken into. **44** "Therefore you also be ready, for the **Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect**.

Matthew 25:13 - "Watch therefore, **for you know neither the day nor the hour** in which the Son of Man is coming.

3. There are some misplaced signs about Christ's 2nd coming, mostly because of a misunderstanding of Matthew 24. The signs of the first part of Matthew 24 actually refer to the Christ's "coming in destruction of Jerusalem," not of his second coming at the end of the world. From Verse 36, you see a distinct difference. **How can we say that?**

a. The disciples asked two questions and got two answers.

Matthew 24:2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." **3** Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, **when will these things be?** And **what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**"

b. There are direct contradictions 矛盾 to what was said about the destruction of Jerusalem in Verses 1-35, and what was said of Christ's 2nd coming Verse 36-51. EG: Sign for the destruction of Jerusalem: If you are in the field and see the Romans coming, run! V18. But when the 2nd coming takes place, two will be in a field, one will be taken and the other left. V40. There is no need to run. Also, of Jerusalem, you hear of troubles of the pregnant, traveling on the Sabbath, or moving in winter. Surely these refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, as there will be no troubles for anyone when Jesus returns! Jesus, on numerous occasions said that the temple would fall in that generation. (Mt 23:36)

c. This cataclysmic language 灾难性的语言 is very similar to the language used in the destruction of smaller or less important cities like Tyre and Babylon. So it is not necessary to apply this language to the rest of the world. Cataclysmic signs do not mark the coming of Christ, normal living does: eating, drinking, and marrying... It was common for men to work in the fields and for women to work the wheat mills..

d. Jesus said at the end of Matthew that he would come suddenly...like a thief in the night... like the suddenness of when the rain started to fall in Noah's day. No one expected it...as it never happened before.
Matthew 24: 36 "But of that day and hour **no one knows, not even the angels of heaven,** but My Father only. 37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

The Apostle Paul confirmed this.

1Thessalonians 5:2 - For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

Christ will unexpectedly come because God wants to stop idleness (for if you know when the master would come, you would only be busy just before he comes). "Edgar Whisenant, a retired NASA engineer, twice predicted the date of the rapture: September 1, 1988 and September 1, 1989. He was wrong on both counts. Harold Camping, a former member of Alameda Christian Reformed Church and the operator of one of the largest Christian radio networks, predicted that the world would end in September of 1994. He also was wrong."

4. Christ will come when all of his children that his Father has given to him believe.

Revelation 6:11 - Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

5. When Christ returns, he will come with glory, majesty, and power, proving he is Judge and king of the whole world. Even the wickedest will accept that Christ is Judge and King of the world and bow to him. He will not come as a king pleading for followers...but as a conquering king.

6. Lessons:

a. Christ will not leave his people in this sin-cursed world forever. That is evidence of love.

b. Distrust anyone who pretends to know the time of the Lord's return. They are deceivers.

c. Preach the Gospel (and support the preaching of the Gospel) so men can be saved from the coming judgment. Be motivated, knowing this this is the only way men can be saved. Work in your homes, churches, neighborhoods, and overseas.

What will happen on earth when Christ comes?

1. When Christ returns the angel of God will sound a trumpet for all on the earth to hear. No one will miss this great blowing of the trumpet...for there has never been one like it, and there would not be another like it...

1Thessalonians 4:15-16 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.

There will be no secret rapture as Pentecostals teach. There will not be a "cosmic dog whistle" (Riddlebarger), that only Christians will hear.

2. When Christ returns, he will come in bodily form and all the earth will see him.

Acts 1:11 - ... "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

3. When Christ returns, Christians who are dead will be raised up and be reunited with a changed, but real body-like Christ's body when he was resurrected.

1Corinthians 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the **dead will be raised incorruptible**, and **we shall be changed**.

Christians who are alive will also be changed. The Christian will get a glorious body in a blink of an eye. This body will not be limited by time or space, just as Christ could walk through closed doors!

4. The Christians (alive and formerly dead) will be taken up from the earth to be with Christ forever.

1Thessalonians 4:17 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**.

I have a sense of wonder that people read this verse (which is tied to Christ's promise in John 14) and that some take it to mean that we will then come back to this earth after it has been burned and purified. They teach that our bodies which will no longer be limited to time and space would then come back to live on an earth controlled by time and space! Just not true!

5. Lessons:

a. Won't it be great to know that all the pains and suffering of this life will be gone? Name your ailment...it will be gone...there will be no more strokes, or damaged Achilles tendons 跟腱, no more exhaustion, or allergies.

b. Be patient through trials of this life. You will be in the presence of the Lord soon enough. Comfort each other with this.

What will happen in heaven when Christ comes

1. Every single man, woman, boy, and girl – from eternity - will have to appear in judgment before Christ.

Daniel 12:2 - And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt 鄙视.

John 5:28-29 - "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 "and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

There are no second chances to be saved after Jesus returns. There is no purging process. After death comes the judgment.

2. You – the saved and the unsaved- will have a command – a summons- to appear in judgment that you cannot resist.

Matthew 25:31 "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.

3. Lessons:

a. While the world has to appear before God's throne of judgment, you have the Advocate who has a sure defense. He will say that he lived for your righteousness, and died for holiness. So look forward to Judgment Day.

b. The wicked, on the other hand, will be condemned. And even their condemnation will confirm God's righteousness. But how terrible will be their day!

Conclusion:

Christ will return suddenly at an unknown but appointed time, with power, glory, and majesty, when all his elect believe in him. He will cause the dead in Christ to be raised up, and the dead and living believers will be given glorious bodies, taken up into heaven, and spend eternity with the Lord. The wicked who have died will also be raised along with the wicked who are living and they will be condemned by God.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Knowing this doctrine, be **motivated to Comfort one another**. 1 Thessalonians 4:18, says: Therefore comfort one another with these words.

2. Then work hard. 1 Thessalonians 5:6, says: Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober 清醒. And you are motivated to be busy. And Luke 19:13...Occupy till I come. When someone asked Martin Luther what he would do if he knew that the Lord was returning tomorrow. Luther reportedly said, "I'd plant an apple tree today."

Finally: If you are not a Christian you can find no comfort in this, but you must hear the sounds of judgment. You must hear the screams of those who are in hell, crying out for rescue but getting none. You must hear these things in order that you will be afraid and when you are afraid that you will repent of your sins and embrace Christ. You may not get another opportunity.