

Jesus Rose—What's Next?

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The battle is over; but Jesus' work is not done.

Part 1

Jesus' last words on the cross were, "It is finished!" Certainly the battle against Satan was over, and the victory was won at that point; but that wasn't the end of the story. The plan of salvation didn't end with Jesus' death. Jesus rose the following Sunday morning. Even then, it wasn't all over. The most important part still remains to be accomplished. Jesus still has to come again to resurrect His followers, take them to heaven, and then recreate the world. Can we emphasize Jesus' Second Coming too much? I don't think so! Can we emphasize Jesus' Second Coming too little? We certainly can; and I'm afraid some churches do.

Suppose there is something you really, really want to have. It is a one-of-a-kind item, and it is for sale right now. There's not another one even remotely like it. If someone else buys it, you will never get another chance to have it. But it is very expensive. It is so expensive that even if you worked at ten times your present salary for the rest of your life, you could not even come close to paying the asking price.

Now, suppose you have a really rich friend who loves you so much he would give you anything. He knows you want this thing, and has promised to buy it and give it to you as a gift. Unfortunately the item is so expensive that even he does not have enough cash on hand to buy it. He uses all his cash to make a down payment and put it on layaway for you. Then he sells all his stocks and bonds to make the second payment. He owns some property in downtown Manhattan, so he sells that to make the third payment. He sells his stake in an NFL football team to make another payment. Then he sells his airplane and his yacht. He sells his summer home in Cape Code, and his villa in the south of France; but that still isn't enough to pay for your gift. So he sells his fleet of luxury vehicles and his Beverly Hills mansion with all its contents. At last he sells the clothes off his back, and wraps himself in a black plastic garbage bag to make the final payment. He tells you, "It is finished. I've made all the payments. I'm going to get your gift. You can expect me to show up at your front door with it very soon."

Now, after doing all that, would there be any doubt in your mind that he is going to come back and give you the gift? Would he have sold everything he has, even the clothes on his back, if it were not his intention to come back with the gift? After such a display of self-sacrifice, there can be no question at all that he will return to give you what he has promised.

Let's continue the analogy. Suppose that this thing you really, really want happens to be the painting of Mona Lisa in the Louvre. Your friend has gone to Paris to get it for you. All you have to do is pound a nail in the wall where you want to hang it, and be ready to open the door for your friend when he returns. You have a nail. You have a hammer. You have a blank spot on a wall where it would be perfectly displayed. Wouldn't you drive the nail into the wall so you would be ready to hang the painting? Wouldn't you be waiting impatiently by the door, watching for your friend to return with the Mona Lisa under his arm? Or would you run a trivial errand, not caring if you aren't home when your friend returns? That's a no-brainer.

What would your friend think if you didn't even care enough about the gift to stay home and wait for him to bring it to you? Wouldn't that hurt him? Is that any way to treat someone who has done so much for you?

Jesus has promised to give you the gift of eternal life. He has paid the ultimate price to purchase it for you. He has gone away to get it. In so many parables, and in plain speech, He has told you to be ready to receive the gift when he comes back. If you know all this, will you risk not being home when He returns with your gift? I hope not!

The Gospel doesn't end with Resurrection Sunday. Jesus' work did not end when He walked out of that tomb. He remained on Earth for a short time before His final ascension, teaching the disciples, telling them what to do before His Second Coming. Ellen White describes Jesus' post-resurrection ministry in the final chapter of her inspiring biography of Christ. Here are some excerpts from that chapter titled, "To My Father, and Your Father", chapter 87 of Desire of Ages.

The time had come for Christ to ascend to His Father's throne. As a divine conqueror He was about to return with the trophies of victory to the heavenly courts. Before His death He had declared to His Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." John 17:4. After His resurrection He tarried on earth for a season, that His disciples might become familiar with Him in His risen and glorified body. Now He was ready for the leave-taking. He had authenticated the fact that He was a living Saviour. His disciples need no longer associate Him with the tomb. They could think of Him as glorified before the heavenly universe.

As the place of His ascension, Jesus chose the spot so often hallowed by His presence while He dwelt among men. Not Mount Zion, the place of David's city, not Mount Moriah, the temple site, was to be thus honored. There Christ had been mocked and rejected. ... so Christ stood upon Olivet, with yearning heart overlooking Jerusalem. The groves and glens of the mountain had been consecrated by His prayers and tears. Its steeps had echoed the triumphant shouts of the multitude that proclaimed Him king. On its sloping descent He had found a home with Lazarus at Bethany. In the garden of Gethsemane at its foot He had prayed and agonized alone. From this mountain He was to ascend to heaven. Upon its summit His feet will rest when He shall come again. Not as a man of sorrows, but as a glorious and triumphant king He will stand upon Olivet, while Hebrew hallelujahs mingle with Gentile hosannas, and the voices of the redeemed as a mighty host shall swell the acclamation, "Crown Him Lord of all!

Now with the eleven disciples Jesus made His way toward the mountain. As they passed through the gate of Jerusalem, many wondering eyes looked upon the little company, led by One whom a few weeks before the rulers had condemned and crucified. The disciples knew not that this was to be their last interview with their Master. Jesus spent the time in conversation with them, repeating His former instruction. As they approached Gethsemane, He paused, that they might call to mind the lessons He had given them on the night of His great agony. Again He looked upon the vine by which He had then represented the union of His church with Himself and His Father; again He repeated the truths He had then unfolded. All around Him were reminders of His unrequited love. Even the disciples who were so dear to His heart, had, in the hour of His humiliation, reproached and forsaken Him.

Christ had sojourned in the world for thirty-three years; He had endured its scorn, insult, and mockery; He had been rejected and crucified. Now, when about to ascend to His throne of glory, ... [will He] withdraw from them His sympathy and love? ... No; His promise to those loved ones whom He leaves on earth is, "I am with you alway[s], even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20.

Upon reaching the Mount of Olives, Jesus led the way across the summit, to the vicinity of Bethany. Here He paused, and the disciples gathered about Him. Beams of light seemed to radiate from His countenance as He looked lovingly upon them. He [did not criticize them] for their faults and failures; words of the deepest tenderness were the last that fell upon their ears from the lips of their Lord. With hands outstretched in blessing, and as if in assurance of His protecting care, He slowly ascended from among them, drawn heavenward by a power stronger than any earthly attraction. As He passed upward, the awe-stricken disciples looked with straining eyes for the last glimpse of their ascending Lord. A cloud of glory hid Him from their sight; and the words came back to them as the cloudy chariot of angels received Him, "Lo, I am with you alway[s], even unto the end of the world." At the same time there floated down to them the sweetest and most joyous music from the angel choir.

While the disciples were still gazing upward, voices addressed them which sounded like richest music. They turned, and saw two angels in the form of men, who spoke to them, saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

... With eager desire all heaven had waited for the end of His tarrying in a world marred by the curse of sin. The time had now come for the heavenly universe to receive their King. ...

Christ had ascended to heaven in the form of humanity. The disciples had beheld the cloud receive Him. The same Jesus who had walked and talked and prayed with them; who had broken bread with them; who had been with them in their boats on the lake; and who had that very day toiled with them up the ascent of Olivet,--the same Jesus had now gone to share His Father's throne. And the angels had assured them that the very One whom they had seen go up into heaven, would come again even as He had ascended. He will come "with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise." "The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." Rev. 1:7; 1 Thess. 4:16; Matt. 25:31. Thus will be fulfilled the Lord's own promise to His disciples: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. Well might the disciples rejoice in the hope of their Lord's return.

When the disciples went back to Jerusalem, the people looked upon them with amazement. After the trial and crucifixion of Christ, it had been thought that they would appear downcast and ashamed. Their enemies expected to see upon their faces an expression of sorrow and defeat. Instead of this there was only gladness and triumph. Their faces were aglow with a happiness not born of earth. They did not mourn over disappointed hopes, but were full of praise and thanksgiving to God. With rejoicing they told the wonderful story of Christ's resurrection and His ascension to heaven, and their testimony was received by many.

The disciples no longer had any distrust of the future. They knew that Jesus was in heaven, and that His sympathies were with them still. They knew that they had a friend at the throne of God, and they were eager to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus. In solemn awe they bowed in prayer, repeating the assurance, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John 16:23, 24. They extended the hand of faith higher and higher, with the mighty argument, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at

the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8:34. And Pentecost brought them fullness of joy in the presence of the Comforter, even as Christ had promised.

All heaven was waiting to welcome the Saviour to the celestial courts. As He ascended, He led the way, and the multitude of captives set free at His resurrection followed. The heavenly host, with shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song, attended the joyous train.

As they drew near to the city of God, the challenge is given by the escorting angels,--

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in."

Joyfully the waiting sentinels respond,--

"Who is this King of glory?"

This they say, not because they know not who He is, but because they would hear the answer of exalted praise,--

"The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle!
Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in."

Again is heard the challenge, "Who is this King of glory?" for the angels never weary of hearing His name exalted. The escorting angels make reply,--

"The Lord of hosts;
He is the King of glory." Ps. 24:7-10.

Then the portals of the city of God are opened wide, and the angelic throng sweep through the gates amid a burst of rapturous music.

There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim. The commanders of the angel hosts, the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds, are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion,--all are there to welcome the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.

But He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming. He approaches the Father, with whom there is joy over one sinner that repents; who rejoices over one with singing. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn

pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished," He addressed the Father. The compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." John 19:30; 17:24.

The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are "accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6. Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. 85:10. The Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1:6.

With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5:12.

Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Rev. 5:13. -----

From that scene of heavenly joy, there comes back to us on earth the echo of Christ's own wonderful words, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17. The family of heaven and the family of earth are one. For us our Lord ascended, and for us He lives. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25. ¹

[music - "Lift Up the Trumpet"]

Part 2

Before the break, we reminded you that the Gospel doesn't end with Jesus' resurrection. Resurrection Sunday is just the beginning of the end. On the cross, Jesus paid the price for us to have eternal life; but His purchase won't be complete until He returns to collect His merchandise. If not for the fact that Jesus will return for us, it would not have mattered if paid the price for us or not. His death on the cross would be meaningless without the Second Coming.

That's why it is strange that some Christian churches pay so little attention the Second Coming. Jesus died to save us—proving that Jesus will return to save us. So, why don't some Christian churches give the Second Coming all the emphasis it deserves?

Have you ever noticed that there are church holidays that celebrate Jesus' birth, and celebrate His death and resurrection; but there is no holiday that celebrates His return. The Advent season emphasizes Jesus' birth. Lent emphasizes Jesus' sacrifice for us. We certainly don't want to minimize the importance of any of these annual reminders of what God has done for us. We are simply pointing out that there isn't an annual emphasis on the Second Coming. There is no Second Coming holiday, or season, in the liturgical cycle. Perhaps there should be.

¹ Ellen White, Desire of Ages, Chapter 87, "To My Father, and Your Father", <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/da/da87.html>

Some might argue that we can't have a Second Coming holiday or season because we don't know the date when He will return. That's certainly true; but ignorance of the date hasn't stopped the church before. We don't know the exact date when Jesus was born, but we celebrate His birth on the pagan holiday, Christmas, even though scholars agree it is the wrong time of year. There is scholarly disagreement upon which Sunday He rose, but many Christian churches celebrate His resurrection by hiding eggs on the pagan fertility festival, Easter. Is there no pagan holiday left which the church could co-opt to celebrate the Second Coming?

Seriously, it is important to celebrate Jesus' birth and death. Whether or not it is appropriate for the church to celebrate them with pagan customs on pagan holidays is a subject that deserves an entire broadcast to address. We don't have time now to get distracted from our main point, which is, Jesus' Second Coming is every bit as important as Jesus' birth and Jesus' death, so it deserves comparable emphasis, but generally does not receive that much attention.

One might argue that the Second Coming is even more important than Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection for three reasons.

First, if it were not for the fact that Jesus is coming again, Jesus birth and death would be no more important than the birth and death of any other great teacher.

Second, we weren't alive at Jesus' birth or death; but we may be alive when Jesus returns. That makes Jesus' return personally important to us right now. Even if Jesus doesn't return until after we die, we will still personally participate in either the resurrection of the righteous, or the resurrection of the wicked. We weren't present at His birth or death; but we will personally experience in His Second Coming one way or another.

Third, there is nothing we can do about Jesus birth or death; but we do have to do something to be prepared for His return. Isn't it important to be conscious of that fact? Don't you want to know how to be ready? Should not the church be telling you that?

Perhaps modern churches don't talk too much about the Second Coming because it is associated with "Judgment Day." Modern society considers it to be a virtue to be non-judgmental, and wants God to be non-judgmental, too. Perhaps that's why some churches don't want to talk about Judgment Day.

Of course, we are all sinners. God has promised to forgive our confessed sins; but if we don't trust God to be forgiving, our consciousness of our sins could make us fearful of Judgment Day. Perhaps some churches don't want to risk making their members uncomfortable by thinking about Judgment Day.

Regardless of the reason, it appears that Judgment Day is generally not anticipated with as much joy today as it was in the past. If you read the Old Testament, especially those books referred to as the Major and Minor Prophets, you will see that the Judgment Day is a time to look forward to; not a time to fear. Judgment Day, also called, "the Day of the Lord," is when all evil is destroyed, and we are delivered from sin. Shouldn't we all want to live in a sinless world with perfectly healthy bodies?

If we trust Jesus to keep His promise to return and save sinners, we should also trust Jesus to keep His promise to forgive our confessed sins. Therefore, we should not fear Judgment Day. We should eagerly await the day when Jesus rescues us from sin and persecution, and creates for us a world of eternal bliss. Judgment Day marks the end of suffering, and the beginning of a brand new life of joy. That is something eagerly to anticipate. Let us rejoice that it is 24 hours closer today than it was yesterday!

[Music – “What a Day That Will Be!”]

Part 3

So far in this broadcast we have said that it is important to remember that Jesus was born in human flesh, and experienced human life, proving that He understands our temptations and weaknesses. We have said that it is important to remember that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross. But then we said that none of this would matter if not for the fact that Jesus is coming again to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

The Second Coming was Jesus’ primary message. If you don’t believe me, just look at all the parables He spoke. Count the number of parables that urge the listener to be ready for the Judgment Day and compare that number to the number of parables that address any other subject. You will find that the vast majority of parables have something to do with the coming Kingdom of God and how to get ready for it. And, just to make sure nobody missed the point of His parables, He spelled it out as plainly as He could, as recorded in places such as Mathew 25.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ...

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ...

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” [Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46]

When summarizing Jesus’ teaching, Mark said,

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” [Mark 1:14]

Matthew confirms this.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” [Matthew 4:17]

Luke tells us that when Jesus sent out the 72 disciples He told them,

“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. [Luke 10:8-12]

Let's not get so wrapped up in the resurrection message that we forget that Jesus' resurrection is the prelude to Jesus' return. Furthermore, let's not forget that we have to be ready for Jesus to return.

Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last." [Luke 13:22-30]

We should not be surprised that the Second Coming and accompanying judgment have been largely forgotten because Peter warned us this would happen in the third chapter of his second letter.

Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.
[2 Peter 3]

Peter was right. Ignorant and unstable people do distort what Paul wrote. They try to make it sound like Paul said that grace annuls the punishment for violating the law. The truth is that Paul said grace gives us the power and desire to keep the law while we wait for the Second Coming. Paul wrote to Titus,

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you. [Titus 2:11-15]

So that's what we do teach. We encourage all our listeners to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

[music – Dave and Sue Pogge, "We Have This Hope"]