

# The Day Christ Comes Again

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## *A Narrative of What That Day Might Be Like*

One day it's really going to happen. It will probably be a day just like any other day. There will likely be no reason whatsoever to think that that day would be the one. But one day it's really going to happen. The day you've heard about and read about, even sung about. The day you've thought about, maybe worried about. The day you've probably known about for many, many years. One day it's really going to happen: the day Christ comes again.

Perhaps it will happen on a Sunday morning. Perhaps it will happen just after you get out of church. You're standing out front with everyone else. You're talking about what you're going to eat for lunch and what you're going to watch on TV.

And then it happens. The day has finally come. The moment has arrived.

You're standing talking with friends, and then you hear it. There is a SHOUT, a shout so pure and so loud that it pervades every corner of the world in an instant. The shout is immediately followed by a voice equally pure and loud, and the sound of a trumpet piercing through the sky (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

And everyone looks up. You know what is happening. You know what you're hearing. You know what you're about to see. You remember reading all about it in the Bible.

The sky is filled with white and gray rolling clouds. But a light shines above the clouds, a light so bright that the clouds then literally disintegrate in the presence of the light. And then you see Him! Then you see Him, and you know who it is.

In the parking lot across the road, a woman screams as she realizes what is happening, and she knows she is not ready. And then another cries out, and another, and another, and they all join in the chorus of fear and terror. And you remember that the Bible warned that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, at a time when no one is expecting it to happen (2 Peter 3:8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3).

In the distance you see people rising into the air. In fact, as far as you can see all around you, there are thousands and thousands of people rising to meet the Lord. And even as they are rising, you notice that their bodies are being changed. And you remember that the Bible said that the dead in Christ will rise first, and that their bodies will be instantly changed from mortal to immortal, from perishable to imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

People continue to be lifted up, one after the other. It is the most amazing thing to behold.

And suddenly your mind is flooded with concern. Where are my children? Where is Mom and Dad? Where is my sister? Where is my brother? Where are all those people that I love so dearly? What is happening to them right now? Were they ready? Were they ready for this day?

And then it's your turn as you and those around you begin to rise up into the sky. You float ever higher and higher. You take your last look at the earth that fades below. It now seems so small and so insignificant. Your last look at this earth—and then it's gone.

One day it's really going to happen.

You find yourself in the midst of a multitude so vast the end cannot be seen. There are literally billions of people gathered together. You know you are in the presence of every person who has ever lived.

And then you feel it. You feel it even before you see it. You are now, not just in the presence of all these people, but you are now in the presence of God! His powerful presence emanates from His throne of glory. It sweeps across the multitude and completely and powerfully overwhelms every single person. You fall to your knees and bow. Your lips cry out as you praise and glorify God. The heavens are filled with billions of voices as they all cry out together, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

And you remember reading in the Bible that one day every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

Throughout the vast multitude, there are so many that are filled with joy at that moment because they have been confessing that sweet name of Jesus ever since the day God washed away all their sins by the blood of the Lamb.

But you also know that, throughout the vast multitude, there are tragically many, many more who are making that great confession for the first time, but it is all too late. They believe in Him now. They confess His name now. There is not a soul in all the crowd who doubts now. But, for many, now is too late.

With every knee bowed, you look up, and you can see the throne. Never in all your life have you seen anything so beautiful, so glorious, so radiant. The brightest of light shines forth around the throne. It is surrounded by a rainbow filled with dazzling shades and hues, colors beyond anything you've ever seen or imagined.

And there on the throne is the Almighty, the Creator, Jehovah God, the Father Himself. And next to Him is the Lamb, Jesus the Christ, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

The multitude continues its expression of praise and glory. And then suddenly it stops. The atmosphere around you has suddenly and dramatically changed. Something is happening over to the left of Jesus. The splendor of the throne is suddenly marred by the appearance of the terrible enemy, the evil adversary, the god of the world below, the great deceiver. The time has come for Satan to be delivered to his eternal torment.

Rising behind him is a scene far worse than you ever imagined. Smoke billows up from beyond the gates of Hell. Already the smell of death and destruction invades and violates your senses. Even from where you are, you can feel the heat from the lake of fire and brimstone. The screams of Satan permeate the vast gathering as he is cast through the gates and sucked into the abyss of Hell (Revelation 20:10).

The heat and the sound and the smell have now all subsided, but the image of Hell remains off to the side. It continues to draw the mesmerizing attention of a large number of people in the crowd. For them, the fear is building yet more and more.

And then your attention is drawn to the right side of Jesus. Descending from above is a city whose glory and elegance is beyond compare. You've seen marvelous beauty on earth. You've seen the awesome wonder of the Grand Canyon and the majestic shining peaks of the mountains. You've seen the splendor of the flower-covered meadows, the magnificent power of the ocean waves, and the illustrious beauty of the sunset.

But the scene that radiates before you now is far beyond anything you have ever seen or imagined.

You remember reading in the Bible about the walls of the city being made of glittering jasper, and the foundation of the walls being made of brilliant stones like sapphires and emeralds. You remember reading that each of the twelve gates would be made of a single perfect pearl. And the streets of the city would be made of gold so pure it was like transparent glass (Revelation 21:18-21).

But never in your imagination did you think that the holy city in Heaven would be so marvelous and resplendent. As you gaze past the throne of God into the city, you see a river flowing as clear as crystal, and you see trees lining the streets, overflowing with an abundance of luscious fruit.

And you remember God's promise for those who will enter into that wonderful eternal city. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There shall no longer be any death, or crying, or sickness, or pain. And there will no longer be any night. And all those who enter in will have no need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God Himself shall give them light, and together they shall reign forever and ever (Revelation 21:4; 22:1-5).

Heaven is now still and quiet until the quiet is interrupted by the voice of a small child. "I want to see Jesus." And more and more children call out, "Me too. I want to see Jesus." And all at once they all, millions and millions of children run to the throne, giggling with delight and laughing all the way. On and on the parade continues as Jesus calls out yet one more time, "Let the little children come to me; for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to them" (Matthew 19:14).

And one by one each child is embraced by Jesus. And tears of joy roll down His face as He welcomes, not only the normal healthy children, but also the children who could never walk, who could never see, who could never play, even children who never lived to take a breath outside their mother's womb. He welcomes them all, and each one of them, with a glorious perfect body, runs happily through the gates into the eternal city of Heaven.

Eventually the last child disappears beyond the gates, and then you look back to the throne. You know the time has come. It is the Day of Judgment. And every one of the billions of people who have ever lived on the earth will stand before the Lord and be judged. It matters not that it will take seemingly many thousands of years to accomplish this enormous task. It matters not because time is no more. And so you settle in your place as you wait for the judging to begin.

You see there has appeared to one side of the throne an enormous collection of books. You remember reading in the Bible about everyone, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and the books being opened. You are about to hear the deeds, both good and bad, of every person who has ever lived (Revelation 20:11-13).

And the roll call of Judgment begins. One by one the names are called. One by one each person stands alone before the throne. One by one the books are opened, and the judgment is declared. One by one each person steps into his eternal destiny.

It is then that you notice there is another book, a very large book over next to Jesus. Written within the pages of that vast book are the names of all those who belong to the Lord, all those who believed and trusted in God and His Son Jesus Christ. It contains all the names of those who will enter into eternal life.

You watch and listen carefully as people from every nation of the world stand before the throne. You hear so many different languages and dialects, but somehow you understand everything that is taking place. Two men had been working in a field when the trumpet sounded. One man is named in the book of life; the other is not. Two women had been grinding at the mill. One enters into eternal life; the other into eternal punishment (Matthew 24:40-41).

You listen as many are told, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited Me in. I was naked, and you clothed Me. I was sick, and you visited Me. I was in prison, and you came to Me."

You hear them reply, "But Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"

You look over to Jesus, and you know what He's going to say. "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it unto Me." You watch as these joyous servants of the Lord walk through the gates to their great reward (Matthew 25:31-40).

You also hear many told by the Lord: "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in. I was naked, and you did not clothe Me. I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me."

And you hear them cry out, "But Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?" And the Lord answers, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it unto Me." And you see the fear on their faces as they are sent away into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41-46).

The judgment of the world continues.

At some point in the proceedings, you see a very large group of Pharisees step forward. Some are dressed in their 1st century robes. Some are dressed in their 21st century attire. One by one they each hold up their good deeds, They say, "Lord, You know about all our good works. Surely You remember all the alms we gave. You couldn't have missed it; we let everybody know every time we went to give.

“And our prayers! Nobody could say prayers like we did. And we'd fast for days so all the people could see how we suffered so much in our piety. You have to let us in. We worked so hard, and we did so much” (Matthew 6:1-18).

But Jesus is not impressed. He says to them in return, "Truly I say to you, you had your reward. Whatever praise you may have obtained from men, that was your reward."

You listen to some who boast about how religious they were. They say, "Lord, you know we prophesied in your name, and we cast out demons, and we performed many miracles. And we upheld your Law, and we upheld our traditions, and we made sure everyone knew that they needed to be just as good as we were."

But again, Jesus is not impressed. He says, "Yes, I saw all you did, and I heard all you said. But none of it made Me glad. The songs of praise and worship you offered up to Me were meaningless because you never truly gave Me your heart. You never gave Me your heart, and that's what I really wanted. Depart from Me; I never really knew you" (Matthew 7:21-23; 15:1-9).

You notice one man who walks boldly up to the throne when his name is called. When the angel opens his book, the man doesn't even wait to hear what is written. He says, "Lord, I know I got everything right. I studied my Bible day and night. I knew more about what the Bible really taught than anyone else I ever encountered. I knew the truth on every verse and every doctrine, and I refused to fellowship any brother who didn't know as much as me. Lord, I've passed the test, and I'm ready for what's coming to me."

You see several people draw near to that man and shout their approval. They all begin to proclaim their right to eternal life because of their superior knowledge. But not a one of them is to be found in the book of life. Not a one of them is named, and they are shocked as they are cast through the gates into Hell.

You watch as another man is called, and after his deeds are read, he falls to his face and says, "God be merciful to me, the sinner" (Luke 18:9-14). The Lord lifts him up, and leads him through the gates into the eternal city.

The judgment continues.

Occasionally you hear a name that sounds familiar. Some are people you know. Some you worked with and saw almost everyday. And now, here they are, facing Judgment, and you think back to the times you talked with them about Jesus.

Some names you recognize as people you read about in the Bible: names like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, David, Job, John the Baptist, Pilate, Peter, Stephen, Barnabas.

And then you hear the name announced, "Saul, who is also called Paul." You look up, and you watch as the crowd parts, and you see a stocky little man with a bald head and a long gray beard. He walks slowly and humbly to the throne.

Everyone gazes and listens as the angel pulls out the book of Paul's deeds and begins to read: "Saul, who is also called Paul, born in the Roman city of Tarsus, a tentmaker by trade, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a superior student of the famous Gamaliel, an acknowledged leader in Judaism, a truly zealous man."

You listen in awe as the many details of Paul's life are mentioned. You remember reading in the Bible about all the times he was imprisoned, and beaten, and stoned, and shipwrecked. You remember reading about how hard Paul worked after his conversion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Finally the angel finishes reading the chronicle of Paul's life. You look over to Paul. His eyes are filled with tears, and then he begins to speak: "Yes, I did give my life in service to the Lord, but I did so only because He first gave His life for me. Whatever I was, whatever I did, it was all because of the grace of God. I sinned and so often fell short of the glory of God. I was the least of all the saints. I was the foremost of all sinners. But I believe that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am nothing in and of myself, but I know Jesus, and Jesus knows me. And my only plea is the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb" (Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 1 Timothy 1:15).

You watch as Jesus steps forward and puts His arms around Paul. They talk quietly for a moment, then Jesus reaches up and wipes away the tears from that old, old face, and then Paul turns and walks away towards the eternal city. And as he walks, you see the pain and the heartache and all the sorrows melt and fade away. And that old solemn apostle Paul jumps and skips, and he shouts with joy as he runs down that golden street.

One day it's really going to happen.

And you'll be there, and you'll see people who were intending to be baptized into Christ in just a week or two, people who were going to repent and come back to God in just a week or two. And you'll see people who had just made their lives right with God that very morning.

You'll see His mighty and severe wrath poured out on those who did not know God, and who did not believe nor obey the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will see the wine of the wrath of God mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger as He will cast them into eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 14:10).

And you'll see His awesome love and grace poured out on a great number in the multitude. They are those who had humbly knelt before the cross, who believed in the sacrifice of Jesus the Son of God, and who came to God and let Him wash them and make them clean. You'll hear the Lord say to them, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

One day it's really going to happen.

And the moment will come when you will hear your name. You will hear your name called, and you will stand right in front of the throne of God. You will gaze into His face, and you will see both the goodness and severity of God (Romans 11:22). Your eyes will move over and become fixed on His Son, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You'll look down at His hands, and in your mind, the scars from the nails will still be there.

Your entire life has been leading up to this moment, to this the most important of all events. There were so many things during your life that you thought were so important, but so few of them seem important now. The angel selects yet another book; it has your name on it, and you silently watch as the book of your life is opened.

One day it's really going to happen. And it's up to you to determine how the story of your life will end.

Will it be the most awful, horrible, the most frightening day of your life as you know you're not ready to stand before the Lord? Or will it be the most glorious, the most wonderful day of your life as you joyously look upon the face of the One who saved you by His grace?

One day it's really going to happen. If you're not ready for that day, you know there is not a thing in this world, not a single thing more important than you being right with God and ready for that day. If you're not ready, you need to get ready today.