

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Intro

*Watch clip from Lord of the Rings:*

<https://youtu.be/Z6XicBBN1I4?t=57s>

In the movie, 10,000 of Saruman's Uruk-hai lay siege to the fortress of Hornburg, which is defended by around 3,300 Rohirrim and Elves. During the battle, nearly all of the Elves are killed. The defenders suffer heavy losses, but hold out until dawn, when Gandalf had promised he would return.

This scene has always reminded me of Jesus' return. Jesus promised that he would comeback, but that before that time, things would get a lot worse. Much like that battle scene. When Jesus does comeback, however, he promises to be like Gandalf: swiftly riding in to save us.

## Review

Before we went on break, we learned about Jesus' ascension into heaven. The Ascension of Jesus is important for a number of reasons.

- 1) It marked the return of His heavenly glory.
- 2) It symbolized His exaltation by the Father (Ephesians 1.20-23). The One with whom the Father is well pleased (Matthew 17.5) was received up in honor and given a name above all names (Philippians 2.9).
- 3) It allowed Him to prepare a place for us (John 14.2).
- 4) It indicated the beginning of His new work as High Priest (Hebrews 4.14-16), advocate (1 John 2.1) and Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9.15).
- 5) It set the pattern for His return. When Jesus comes to set up the Kingdom, He will return just as He left-literally, bodily, and visibly in the clouds (Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7).

Today, however, we're going to talk about the return of Christ. This is a much-debated issue. Often, we get into arguments about when/how/why Jesus will return.

## The Return of Jesus

Let's break this discussion down into three sections; when, how, and why Jesus will return.

When will Jesus return?

**Do you believe Jesus will return? Why?**

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**If you believe in the return of Jesus, do you think it will happen sooner or later? Why?**

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In the New Testament's 260 chapters, Christ's return is mentioned no less than 318 times. Statistically, one verse for every 25 pages of the Bible refers to the return of Jesus Christ in some way, shape, or form. The good news is that the Bible is clear - Jesus Christ will come back again. The bad news is, we're not sure exactly when that will be. Jesus declared in Matthew 24.36, ""But of that day and hour [when I return,] no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." In addition, Jesus said in Acts 1.7, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority." These verses make it clear that no one knows the exact date or time Jesus will return except for the Father.

In fact, the timing of Jesus' return and the end of the age is not for us to know. Scripture nowhere encourages us to try to determine the date. However, that has not stopped people from trying to figure out the exact timing.

A recent, popularly proposed date was May 21, 2011. This was predicted by Harold Camping of Family Radio. Many people believed him even though he previously

predicted that Jesus would come back in 1994. Camping claimed to have evidence for the May 21, 2011, date in Scripture, but he was clearly wrong.

Camping, and other like him, missed the point of why Jesus and the apostles foretold of Jesus' return.

The forewarning of Jesus' return was meant to help prepare us to live in anticipation. We are to "be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when we do not expect Him" (v. 44). The force of Jesus' words diminishes if at some point in the future someone will be able to determine when He is coming back. If the date is discovered, we no longer need to "keep watch" or "be ready."

How will Jesus return?

In the book of Revelation (19.11), John writes, "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war." Angels tell us in Acts (1.11), "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Some people have tried to argue that second coming is a "spiritual" coming not an actual physical return of Jesus. In other words, Jesus isn't actually physically coming back. Rather, the second coming was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and Christ made Himself present through the Holy Spirit. There are two problems with a spiritual or non-literal return. First, the angels in Acts 1 make it clear that just a Jesus physically ascended into a heaven, so he will physically return. Second, many New Testament writers, who wrote after the day of Pentecost, write about Jesus' return still yet to happen. If they did not think Pentecost fulfilled Jesus' return, then neither should we.

Jesus' return is pictured as actual and physical. In his vision of judgment upon the wicked, the apostle John tells us that Jesus is returning on a white horse. The horse's white color represents purity or victory for this rider is holy and goes forth to be the triumphant conqueror. During ancient times, victorious Roman generals entered their conquered cities in chariots drawn by white horses. The entire setting of this verse implies victory over Christ's enemies. As such, the word white indicates triumph, a successful war.

He will be accompanied by his angels and heralded by the archangel (1 Thes. 4.16). Upon his return, he will sit on his throne and judge over all the earth. The Bible paints a clear contrast between the way Jesus first came to earth in humility and the way he returns in glory.

## Why Jesus will Return

The why has three answers: resurrection, judgement, and restoration.

The first reason why Jesus is coming back is to resurrect believers from the dead. Since sin entered the world, death has plagued us (Gen. 3). Christ came to do away with sin and its consequences, death being chief concern. When Jesus returns, the resurrection of every believer begins. This will be an actual physical resurrection. So if you die before the return of Jesus, please do not scatter your ashes in the ocean. You don't want to have to swim hundreds of miles the minute Jesus raises you from the dead.

The second reason is judgement. For many people, the final judgement sound terrifying. In actuality, for Christians, it is nothing to be feared. Rather, we are to rejoice at the final judgement – it will vindicate our lives. The final judgement is not meant to weigh your sins against your positive qualities. God already knows your sins, and Christ has paid the cost for your forgiveness. The result of the judgement will be our being welcomed into the New Heaven and New Earth or cast away to Hell. Jesus made it clear (Matt. 25), that judgement is permanent. Those who did not follow Christ will not be welcomed into Jesus' restored creation.

Some have struggled with why a good God would send people to Hell. We should not think of Hell as a place of punishment that God arbitrarily sends. Instead, Hell is the opposite of Heaven. It is the *chosen state of separation from God*. It is better to think of Hell as the place people chose, rather than the place God sends. In all of our actions we are either choosing to move towards or away from God. God does not control our actions so when we chose to move away from God we choose to move in the opposite direction, which is hell. The tragedy of Hell is not fire and devils, but the permanent separation from God.

The third reason why Jesus must return is the restoration or recreation of all things. Revelation says that when Jesus returns he will recreate the world, "Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." After the events of the end times, the current heavens and earth will be done away with and replaced by the new heavens and new earth. The eternal dwelling place of believers will be the new earth. The new earth is the "heaven" on which we will spend eternity. It is the new earth where the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, will be located. The concept that heaven is "in the clouds" is unbiblical.

The concept that we will be "spirits floating around in heaven" is also unbiblical. The heaven that believers will experience will be a new and perfect planet on which we will dwell. The new earth will be free from sin, evil, sickness, suffering, and death. It will likely be similar to our current earth, but without the curse of sin.

Review Questions:

**When will Jesus Return?**

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**Why Was Jesus' return foretold?**

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**What will Jesus' return be like?**

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**What are the three reasons for Jesus' return?**

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*Watch “The End of Time” by The Story Teen Edition*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSO1MPbtCJo>