

On the Sunday morning following the crucifixion of Jesus, some women came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus only to find the tomb empty. *Luke 24:4-8 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: (5) And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? (6) He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, (7) Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. (8) And they remembered his words.* Jesus was resurrected on the third day just as he said he would be. This is a foundational block for Christianity for without the resurrection we would have no hope and our religion would be false

In writing to the church in Corinth, Paul would address this matter. Notice what he says. *1 Corinthians 15:12-14 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: (14) And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* Paul argues that if Christ was not resurrected, then everything that he preached and believed in would be a lie, but skip down a few verses. *1 Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.* But Christ was raised for the dead. It did actually happen and Paul could testify as a witness that it is true. *(21) For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Just as Christ was raised, so shall all mankind. Speaking of the resurrection of mankind, Jesus would say, *John 5:28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* So all men (both righteous and wicked) that die, one day they will come forth from the grave – some to life and others to damnation.

Paul continues his message to the Corinthians by saying, *(23) But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (24) Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.* Christ is described as “firstfruits.” This is an agriculture term that was used when the first fruits of the crop were gathered. It symbolized the first gathering with the assurance that more was to come. So Christ was the first to come forth from the grave with the assurance that more was to come. Verse 23 says that those that belong to Christ would be next. Keep in

mind that this letter was written to concerned Christians, so the none-Christian is not considered in context as he was in John 5:28-29. Once the Christians come forth, Jesus presents them to his Father, i.e. the God of heaven. Notice that this is called “the end” in verse 24. We are talking about when Jesus comes again and the dead will be resurrected. Jesus calls this “the last day” in John 6. ***John 6:39-40 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*** It's mentioned again in vs 44 & 54. We know from John 12:48 that this is the Day of Judgment. ***John 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.***

Because Jesus was resurrected, we too will be resurrected when Jesus comes again in the last day. At that time the righteous will be given to the Father in heaven and the unrighteous will receive damnation.

For the next few minutes I want to consider what the Bible has to say about the return of Jesus. To begin let's turn to 1 Thes. 4. Beginning in verse 13, Paul addresses a concern that the brethren in Thessalonica had regarding the righteous dead. Nothing in these verses references the wicked and unrighteous. In an attempt to ease their concern he says: ***1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For 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 first: (17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.***

From this passage we learn that Jesus will descend from heaven. This complements what the messengers told the apostles when Jesus ascended into heaven. ***Acts 1:11 Which also said, 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.*** We also learn that this will be a noisy event. There will be a shout by the Lord himself along with the voice of the archangel. Then God will make an announcement with a trump sound. This will be known by all mankind. ***Revelation 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*** John tells that “every eye will see him.” This will not be some secret event where some will be raptured away and others left behind wondering what happened. No this will be an event known by all men.

Notice how Peter describes it. *2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* Peter begins by saying it will be suddenly, unannounced like a thief in the night. A thief doesn't send you a notice announcing his arrival, he comes unexpectedly. So like a thief, the Lord will come and when he does the earth as we know it will be destroyed with a great noise. This great noise will likely be the shout of the Lord, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. There will be no place for the Lord to reign a thousand years.

From our 1 Thes 4 passage, we learn that the righteous dead will be caught up into air to meet Jesus followed by the righteous living, thus all the righteous will meet Jesus in the air. Again nothing is mentioned about the wicked here. John 5:28-29 deals with them.

Now turn back to 1 Corinthians 15. *1 Corinthians 15:50-53 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (51) Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* Here we learn that when Jesus come with all this noise, not only will we see him but the bodies have will be changed. We will need a new body to live in a newly prepared place, and all this will happen in the twinkling of the eye – or instantaneously. A blink of the eye is quick, but a twinkle is inconceivably fast. Because Jesus was resurrected, we too will be resurrected when Jesus comes again and will meet him in the air.

**One final point on the coming of Jesus and that is when.** Many predictions have been made through the years as to when Jesus is coming again. In fact many today look at the world events and say that the time is near. So can we expect Jesus to soon return?

We noted a few minutes ago that Peter said his return will be like a thief in the night. Paul says the same thing. *1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. (2) For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. (3) For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

Paul says too that the day of the Lord will be as a thief in the night but notice v3. When you think every this is safe and peaceful, the thief comes but in the context of the day of the Lord he adds that this day will be *sudden destruction and there will be no escaping it.*

Jesus offers the same thought. Look at Matthew 24 beginning with verse 36. ***Matthew 24:36-39 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (37) But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (38) For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, (39) And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*** The coming of Jesus will be suddenly just like the flood during the days of Noah. The day before the flood there was no indication that would be the last day. People were going about doing what they were accustomed doing. It was just another normal day. That's the way it is going to be when Jesus comes again. So Jesus follows this illustration with a warning. ***Matthew 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.***

Then Jesus gives the illustration of the thief just as Paul and Peter did. ***Matthew 24:43-44 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. (44) Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*** Again he follows the illustration with the admonition to be ready, because we just don't know when the Jesus is coming. Back up in v36 we are told that the ***day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*** In Mark's account of this message he adds that even Jesus does not know when. ***Mark 13:32-33 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. (33) Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.***

So when will Jesus come again; no one knows. There will be no indicators as to when-it'll be just like the days of Noah. There is a host of passages that tell us to be ready because we don't know when. The only thing we can say with certainty is that we are one day closer than we were yesterday.

Are you ready?

Invitation