

THE DAY CHRIST CAME

The following comments serve as an introduction to today's topic, The Day Christ Came. There is no single, comprehensive description of the second coming of Jesus found in the Bible. Instead, there are scattered passages, which present to the reader somewhat of a challenge. The second coming will be a complex sequence of events, for the most part, outside the realm of human experience.

The object of this scenario is to help all of us to conceptualize the event of Jesus' coming. I'm convinced that having some sort of mental impression of what that event will be like will help us understand the future.

I do not wish to imply that the realities of what we have hoped for will always be exactly what we thought they would be. Events will seldom, if ever, be just the way we dreamed it would be. In regard to the second coming, God has given us just enough information and has related such information to enough human experiences for us to be able to construct a mental impression. While today's impression may not be exactly on target or just like your impression, but I have tried to embody in it the most prominent features contained in the word of God; thus I have punctuated the story with scriptures.

While I predominately use the KJV of the Bible, today's scriptural references are from the New American Standard Version as an attempt to provide scripture more in tune with of everyday speaking.

Now that eternal life has begun and I have eaten freely of the Tree of Life, I can now devote myself to recalling the events of the day when Christ came.

I remember waking up that morning about daylight. As I awoke and slowly became aware of things. I remember that I sensed nothing different in the air, no new sounds, no unfamiliar aroma. The sound of a bird-singing outside the bedroom window was disturbed only occasionally by the noise of a passing car. The air was crisp. I remember thinking that we just might have an early winter this year.

As always, I lay in bed a few minutes and thought about what I had ahead of me that day, and then I had a brief prayer. When I got out of bed, I remember putting both feet on the floor and starting to get up. A stabbing pain in my lower back almost took my breath away. I had pulled a muscle yesterday while putting out some hay for the goats at the tree farm; but I went ahead and stood. I convinced myself that a little moving around and the stiffness would be gone.

All was just like it had been for many other fall mornings around the house. This morning, I made the coffee and by the time I was settling down in my chair, Martha was stirring in the kitchen. I even remember what she made for breakfast, biscuits and gravy. Oh, how I love biscuits and gravy.

Not even when I watched a few minutes of the news did I sense anything out of the ordinary. Taxes were going up. A flood in Mexico had destroyed hundreds of homes; rioting in California; fighting in Iraq; and another teenage girl was missing in Georgia.

There was nothing different. You might have thought there would have been something, some little something to clue me to the possibility that that day was going to be unlike any day since creation. After all, before earthquakes and major storms, animals have been noted to be restless. So, you would have thought that there would have been something, be it ever so small, to indicate that the day would be the last day. That on this day, Jesus was going to come.

Matt. 24:35ff "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage."

2 Pet. 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief..."

Martha drove to the store that morning while I started mending fence. I guess I had always thought that if Jesus came in my life, I would be with my family. I had sometimes envisioned us standing together, in the open-air, and looking up into the

sky. Our arms would be around each other. We would be reassuring each other that there was nothing to dread, no reason to be afraid.

Sometimes I had thought how nice it would have been if Jesus came on Sunday while the church was assembled. For some reason, I never dreamed of not being with those I loved. It never occurred to me that I would be alone... in the "out-back"... on a Tuesday. But, then, it really didn't matter, did it?

Matt. 24:40, 41, 44 "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

I remember settling down on a fallen tree to rest for a moment before proceeding. I poured a cup of coffee from the thermos. It was a little bit chilly and I was glad I had worn my jacket. I thought of my "To-Do-List" and it seemed endless. There were bills to be paid, calls to make, sermons to prepare--I had decided next Sunday to preach another "Steps of Salvation" in an attempt to reach that husband that had never obeyed the gospel. There were letters to write and, oh yes, a need to run by the feed store to buy some goat feed on my way home. Little did I realize that no item on my list would be done that day, or tomorrow, or for eternity. In a few minutes, it wouldn't matter. I needn't have felt burdened. It was about to be over.

Luke 21:34,35 "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth."

After a couple of minutes of surveying the wooded area where I was working and observing a few squirrels jumping from one limb to another, I decided it was time to get back to work. I got up and "Ouch! There's that catch in my back again." I straightened myself rather gingerly and walked slowly to the pick-up to put back the thermos. As I reached the truck, I started to reach for the door...I never touched it.

I had read of persons who had survived a brush with death. Some of them had told of time seemingly coming to a halt or everything moving in slow motion. It was like a clock that is unplugged and comes to a stop. Even the second hand is frozen in its course. Instinctively, I knew that time had come to an end.

Heb. 3:13 "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called, "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

2 Pet. 3:3, 4 "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with

their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.'"

Time no longer had any bearing on the sequence of events that followed. It might have taken place over a period of 10 years or 10 seconds. Since time as I had always conceived of it was no more, it was immaterial how long it took. However I do remember the suddenness of His coming. Time had been split into its most infinite part and stopped for eternity.

1 Cor. 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."

The sound I heard next was different than anything I had ever heard--if you could call it hearing. I recall it seeming like a sound that was more felt than heard with the ears. It penetrated every cell of my body and stirred my very soul. I had never really felt my soul until then. Oh, I had believed I had a soul because of the Bible, but heretofore I had never felt it. The sound was like a shout in the sense it was a command, an order to my spirit to be free. It was like a voice, a soothing voice that enveloped me in peace and erased my fear. It was like a trumpet, calling me home.

1 Thess. 4:16 "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice the archangel, and with the trumpet of God..."

I was reaching for the door when things came to an end and so with my hand still extended, I was changed. A warmth filled my body unlike any I had ever felt. It wasn't just that my arms or my legs or my chest was warm, it was a glowing like feeling that came from down inside and filtered throughout my body. I recall noticing that even my toenails felt warm.

My right hand that I had used to reach for the door, I now lifted up in front of my eyes. I examined it, turning it one way then another. Rather dazed, I stared into the glass of the door, thinking that perhaps there might be a reflection giving me a clue as to what had just happened to me. It was incredible. My skin had become smooth. All the lines and scars and spots were gone. It was like the skin of a baby, flawless and clean. It even had an illumination that I was convinced shone through my clothes.

For the first time in my existence, I felt relaxed. Oh, in times past when my work was done at the end of the day and I would stretch out in my easy-chair, I thought that I was feeling relaxation but it was nothing in comparison to this. My body was suddenly so relaxed, so erased of care, and so at peace. Somehow I knew that my heart would no longer have to beat to sustain me. I knew I could exist and live forever with only this peace, this incredible peace. The pain in my back was gone.

1 Cor. 15:52, 53 "...and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality...then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"

2 Cor. 5:2 "For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven."

I chuckled to myself about how many times I had tried to figure out what this change was going to be like. The questions generally ranged along the lines of "Will, we know each other," "will, I be like the angels," and "will, I be able to feel and remember." How futile my speculations had been!

1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him...."

I now recall how this peaceful glow gave me a sensation of being weightless as if a gentle breeze could send me flying like a feather. I glanced down for no longer could I feel the weight of my body pressing against the earth. I was rising up into the air.

1 Thess. 4:17 "then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

I rose up above the farm where I had worked for years. I rose above the house. I thought of Martha and the rest of the family. I did not fear for them as I thought I would. Through my transformation, I had lost the need to worry. Furthermore, for some reason I knew they were OK and that my presence to comfort was no longer needed. I rose above the trees.

As I looked around, I saw others around me going upward. In the direction of the cemetery, a large group was rising as well. As I rose farther above the trees, I remember seeing the cemetery. The graves had been unearthed. The coffins were opened and headstones were toppled and scattered. The resurrection had taken place.

John 5:28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth..."

Down below I saw many people still on the earth. Even though they had been transformed to become immortal like I had been, they didn't seem to have the same peace as me.

I saw them all. There were ones that had been the prominent of our community as well as infamous. I recognized a brother who just last year had left the Lord. There was now nothing to distinguish them apart. Unlike those that were rising upward above the earth, still adorned in our earthly clothes, those still on the ground were naked. They were all terrified.

Many were on their knees, bent over with their faces to the ground and their hands behind their heads. They trembled as they wept. Others were running about as if they were trying to find a place to hide. They would run to one place and try to hide and then to another.

I saw one man run into our house. A moment later he came out the back door. Frantically, he ran and dove under a fallen tree. Out from under it, he ran to a car, got inside and closed the door. Many ran madly from one place to another. Their cry was pure terror.

Rev. 6:15, 17 "And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne..."

Turning my gaze upward, I understood why there was such fear upon the earth. In the sky was the Son of Man, the Faithful and True, the Word of God - Jesus the Christ, himself.

The brightness of the glory of His appearance was beyond description. His splendor was matched only by the splendor of the throne upon which He sat.

All around Him were angels. As far as the eye could see there were angels. They didn't have wings like I had always thought of angels having. As a matter of fact, they looked human. They were clothed in white robes. Their faces had a glow. They were conversing with one another; some were pointing down to the earth. Occasionally, one of the angels would look toward one of us who were rising in the air. Pointing with glee he called attention to the other angels, as if he was showing them someone they knew and were also delighted to see. I thought I saw one angel point at me and smile.

Matt. 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne."

Heb. 1:14 "Are they (i.e. angels) not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation."

While still rising, I vividly recall the death of the earth. It seemed my upward journey paused as if to give me and the other redeemed a chance to bid farewell to the earth and all that embellished it. Down below were the houses and land and businesses and boats and all the other material things which so many had worshipped in their lives.

At that moment, I realized that it was not the fault of creation that so many would be lost. It was their own fleshly lusts that led to their misplaced priorities. Yet, under the curse of sin, creation had suffered. But, now, it was about to be over. The earth: the mountains and the rivers; the plants: the trees and the grasses; the animals: the dogs and the horses and yes even the goats, all seemed to sing a song of release.

Rom. 8:21 "...the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

Suddenly, all movement stopped. All the animals stopped, not a leaf moved. Even the rivers and creeks stopped there flowing. All the frantic activity among those that were still on the earth came to a halt. I had never heard complete silence upon the earth, until then. The earth itself seemed to sigh deeply and then it was gone. In a flashing light and a loud explosion, it was all gone. Looking upward I saw that even the sun, the moon, and the stars were gone. Down below, where I had once lived, there was nothing.

2 Pet. 3:7, 12 "But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire...the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will melt with intense heat..."

Just as quickly as all the other events seemed to transpire--the changing of my body to become immortal, the resurrection of the dead, my ascension into the air, and the destruction of the earth--it was like I blinked my eyes and suddenly found myself standing on a plain in the midst of the great expanse of humanity.

Each side of me and further than the eye could see were men and women from all nations. I saw people from Africa and China and India. Each nation, it's people standing together, was clearly distinguished by color. Each nation was like a boundless colored sea, black and brown and yellow and white.

Matt. 25:32 "And all the nations will be gathered before Him..."

Even though I had been separated from lost humanity during the initial events of the coming of Jesus, I was now reunited with them. At that moment, I realized the impartiality of God. My last stand with the lost would be the stand I would take with them before the judgment seat of Christ. In spite of the fact of my redemption, I would take my turn and before the Judge I would be called.

Rom. 2:9 – 11 "There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."

Even though I stood in the midst of humanity, I knew I wasn't a part of it. For one thing, I was still clothed with the same shirt and pants that I had put on the morning Jesus came, the rest of humanity was naked. All were naked except for a scattered few like me.

Matt. 7:13, 14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it."

Each one of the lost, billions of persons, stood in silence with heads bowed and their arms hanging limp at their sides. I recall thinking that they were like prisoners whose countenance appeared beaten-down by their own hopelessness. Every man and woman was too lost in his or her own pondering to speak or even to move.

I knew that those around me were those who had been so terrified upon the earth while I was rising in the air with the saved. However, no longer did I see fear upon their faces. For quite a while I studied their stooped bodies, and the deep, downward flowing lines which marred their facial features and made them all seem alike.

Then, I understood. The lost had surrendered to fear. What I now saw in their countenance was shame. The most heartfelt and absolute shame I had ever witnessed. As I gazed upon the sight of the throngs of the lost, a statement from the Bible came to me,"

They are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks." (Rom. 1:21).

Surveying again this great assembly I now noticed that there were no children. There should have been millions of children, but there was not one.

I recall considering this mystery. The last time I had seen a child was the morning that Jesus came. I remembered that as I was going to the farm that morning, I had seen a few children waiting for the school bus. I even remember thinking that the bus was running late and that they were probably going to be tardy. These were the last children I had seen since the start of the course of events that had brought me here.

Then, as it had seemed with so many other questions, instinctively I knew the answer,

just as if my mind had been prepared to erase all confusion. These children at the bus stop as well as all other children were safe, being cared for by the love of Jesus. No longer was there any question or even a tinge of concern.

Matt. 19:14 "But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'"

As if to allow me time to assess the situation, the throne of Christ finally appeared. A haze above mankind was suddenly being drawn back like a curtain. Every eye turned upward to behold Christ on His throne in the company of all His angels. A great thundering gasp echoed upon the judgment plain. With all humanity, my knees were suddenly drawn as if the weight of the glory of His presence was too great to bear while standing. All humanity, the lost as well as the saved, bowed before the throne.

Rom. 14:10-11 "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of For it is written, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.

The throne, which stayed suspended above all the nations, was not too much different in shape and design than thrones I had seen while upon the earth. It was white; a glowing white like it has been carved from a giant pearl and then polished for a thousand years. From the throne in the front were steps, 12 of them that went down to a flat area that was rather translucent, like glass. On one side of the throne was a rather ordinary table with books on them--I counted 27. Several angels were standing ready as if to attend to the books. Then on the other side of the throne stood a podium with an angel behind it. On the podium, I saw a single, a larger book, which was bound in gold.

Matt. 25:31 "...then He will sit on His glorious throne."

Jesus was seated on the throne with His back straight and His arms on the armrests. On the tops of his hands and on his feet were the wounds of His Crucifixion. On His forehead I saw the pitted skin where the crown of thorns had been pressed. He was dressed in a long white robe.

Rev. 1:7 "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him."

As I watched, angels came forth from behind the throne and began to instruct men and women of the nations to make a single-filed line that ascended to the platform before the Judge. In this fashion, nation after nation, person after person individually stood before the throne. There was no way to evade it. There was no escape. There was no way to even cower-down in a crowd. Each man and woman took a turn, standing

alone, exposed before the throne.

2 Cor. 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

If something like this had happened during my life upon the earth, I would have quickly become impatient. However, now time was no more. It really didn't matter. I had nothing else to do and no other place to be. I waited as each person had a turn before the Judge. One by one, the lost faced Him. Sometimes there would be a discussion, as some attempted an ill-fated defense. For each person, the Judge listened. Always, whenever a defense was made, the Judge would wait until the case was presented and then at the Judge's command, one of the angels would select a book from the table. He would turn to a page and read. The outcome was always the same. The defense was refuted. The defendant was sentenced.

Rev. 20:12. "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened;...and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."

John 12:48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge at the last day."

Matt. 7:22, 23 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

For every lost person--those who had been rich as well as the poor, the famous as well as the infamous--the sentence was the same. Pointing to the left, the Judge would say, "*Depart from Me.*" Then, without any resistance, the condemned would slowly turn and walk down a path which finally disappeared into darkness. From that darkness, I saw no one return.

Matt. 8:12"...cast out into the outer darkness, in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

As the lost came before Him nation by nation and then person by person, it seemed that the mood of the Judge would change. For those people from Russia and China and other countries where I knew the gospel did not have free course, the Judge's features would soften when He pronounced judgment. It was a look of regret. I knew that this was not the will of Jesus that these people be lost. They are the ones He had come to save. I understood that they were lost not entirely of their volition but because

of the hardness of other men's hearts, which denied them the opportunities to be saved.

I understood that some of these victims were lost because of the worldliness and hard heartedness of some whom in my life I had even called brethren; brethren who repeatedly ignored their commission to save the lost.

Since my change to become immortal, I had wondered if I would have the capacity to feel sorrow. As I viewed this sight of eternal victims, the answer came as I felt a tear in the corner of my eye.

Luke 12:47, 48 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few."

Just as the mood of the Judge would take on a tenor of regret for the lost victims of humanity, conversely, it would harden for certain ones that infrequently appeared before Him. Before these, the eyes of the Judge would burn with fury that would send a tremor through my soul. His anger was unmasked as He would pronounce judgment and with the thrust of His arm to the left of his throne, would send them hurdling through the air into the abyss of hell. Their screams of horror were unabated until they reached the opening and the black fingers of outer darkness reached out and enclosed around them.

I knew who these were. They were ones whose own lostness became stumbling blocks to the salvation of others. They were the ones in positions of power and influence who with brazen faces opposed the word of God. They were the atheists, the philosophers, leaders of men, and educators who relentlessly polluted the minds of the innocent. All of them had had opportunities to have known better and to have been saved themselves but, instead, had chosen to walk upon the blood of Jesus.

2 Thess. 1:6 "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire."

Rom. 2:5 "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

There were also those who had once been members of the church, who had been given abundant means to have been saved and abundant resources to have worshipped God, but instead had spent their lives pridefully nurturing the flesh and denying the Spirit. They also drank of the undiluted wrath of God. I heard them cry

for mercy. For them, no mercy was given.

Heb. 12:17 "For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it with tears."

2 Pet. 2:20 "For if after they have escaped the defilement's of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first."

From time to time, one would come before the throne that was not judged to be lost. Expectantly, the saved one would stand before the throne. The Judge would nod to the angel standing at the podium with the book bound in gold. The angel would open the book, find a page, bring his finger down the page, and stop. With an expression of delight he would lean over and whisper to the Judge. The Judge would smile and standing He would declare with an obvious tone of pride,

"Well done! Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of Thy Master." Matt 25:21, 23

Rev. 20:12 "...and another book was opened, which is the book of life."

Luke 10:20"... rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

After each pronouncement of life, two angels would step out from behind the throne. One had a crown, the other had a robe. The crown was a simple design; not really a crown as I had always imagined a crown but more like a ring of pure light. As the saved one bent forward, the ring of light was placed on his head.

The robe also was quite simple. There were no designs embroidered in it. No mixture of colors. It was pure white; a white so radiant that it glowed. Instinctively, I knew that each thread represented every deed the saved one had done in his/her life to the glory of God. Somehow, the glory each rendered to God by their deeds had now become their glory--a glory that would be worn in the presence of God for eternity.

Standing behind each of the saved, the angel carrying the robe would ceremonially place it upon the shoulders of the saved. Their earthly clothes instantly disappeared as the robe seemed to flow around the body. At no time did their nakedness appear.

2 Tim. 4:8 "...in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also all who have loved His appearing."

Rev. 19:8 *"And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."*

After receiving the crown and the robe, Jesus would point the saved to where several angels were standing off to the right. These angels then ushered the saved to a large group of others who were all similarly adorned.

Matt. 25:32 – 34 *"And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"*

I remember carefully examining the assembly of the saved. They were talking and laughing. It was a festive spirit I observed--a homecoming. My joy was unbounded when I saw a brother I knew. Many-a-time I had seen that face in the audience when I preached. I hardly recognized him because his face no longer showed the weariness it once had. I thought of calling to him but I didn't; I knew that before long I would be joining him and the rest of the saved. I knew also that when my turn came to crossover, I would find my wife and other family members among this heavenly assembly. Oh, happy day!

I knew; this assembly was the glorified church. It was being assembled in heaven and being readied for its presentation to the Father. When I arrived along with the rest of the saved, there the assembly would be complete.

1 Cor. 15:24 *"...then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power."*

I was stirred from my thoughts by an angel who touched my shoulder and pointed to the platform before the throne. It was empty. I was next. I saw Jesus look at me and smile.