

Call to Worship

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will be the first to rise. After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

Invocation:

Heavenly Father ,you have declared that there is no other name in heaven or earth of greater worth or significance than Jesus, your beloved Son. At the sound of that name on the Day that is coming, no mouth will be closed. All will be opened in awe at the presence of Jesus. This day we meet to honour our Lord, to learn more of his approaching return and to grow more steadfast in hope and expectation as obedient children of God.

Hymn: *by C.S. Horne*

1. Sing we the King who is coming to reign, glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain;
Righteousness, peace then His empire shall bring, joy to the nations when Jesus is King.
*Come let us sing: Praise to our King, Jesus our King, Jesus our King:
This is our song, who to Jesus belong: Glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.*
2. All men shall dwell in His marvellous light, races long severed His love shall unite,
Justice and truth from His sceptre shall spring, wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King.
3. All shall be well in His kingdom of peace, freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase,
Foe shall be friend when His triumph we sing, sword shall be sickle when Jesus is King.
4. Knowledge and fear of the Lord then shall be as the deep waters that cover the sea;
All things shall be in the splendour of spring and all harmonious when Jesus is King.
5. Kingdom of Christ, for thy coming we pray, hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day
When this new song Thy creation shall sing, Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King.

Scriptures

- Titus 2:11-13 Philippians 3:20-21 2 Timothy 4:8 1Thessalonians 1.7-10
- Hebrews 9:28 1 Corinthians 1:7-8 Revelation 1:7 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17

These and many other statements urge us to be stirred by expectation of our lord's return and appearing. Note these and if like many, this event has weakened, pray the father to revive it with clear understanding. For that is his desire and so it should be ours too.

- Mark 13 (parallel Matthew 24) details Jesus answer to the disciples three questions about the future.

Prayer with the persecuted church;

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we are one with those around the world who bear mockery, abuse and death for their faith in the Lord Jesus. And for

The Coming Of Christ: Reviving Godly Expectation

opportunities through agencies to visit them in prison, to clothe, feed and encourage them. Grant that we too with your strength will also honour you when we are singled out for abuse or opposition for the precious, eternal faith you have given to us .In Jesus Name.

Hymn by C. Wesley.

1. Rejoice, the Lord is King: your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!
2. Jesus, the Saviour, reigns, the God of truth and love;
When He has purged our stains, He took his seat above;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!
3. His kingdom cannot fail, He rules o'er earth and heaven;
The keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!
4. Rejoice in glorious hope! Our Lord and judge shall come
And take His servants up to their eternal home:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

The Coming of Christ: Reviving Godly expectation.

The Second Coming of Christ both thrills some yet terrorizes others. This event is the end of history for those who either actively or passively oppose the Kingdom of heaven. The first coming was to demonstrate the character of God and for Christ to do the foundational work of reclaiming humanity and the earth for the purposes of its Creator. The second Coming is to complete the purpose of the first Coming.

Christ's Coming, his appearing demonstrates and promises that those who maybe poor in this world's powers can expect to inherit the earth by joining with Jesus, the Lord of the new creation.

At this great coming, it will be all over for some. But for others it will be the inauguration of the new heavens and the new earth and their place in it.

But what expectancy was there for Christs Coming or did it die out after a few years? There isn't much anticipation today amongst mainline churches or in public thinking.

No, expectation didn't die out and the phrase uttered by Jesus about His Coming was never forgotten. it is emphatic in the teaching of Jesus:

"Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory"

The Coming Of Christ: Reviving Godly Expectation

So prominent was this that almost as soon as Jesus ascended back to heaven early believers were expecting his return. And this did not abate. The earliest creed of the beginning church was one word; Maranatha, “Come O Lord”! it was in the language Jesus spoke.

Not only in first century Scriptures but in the copious writings of the church leaders in the first four centuries we find many references to the Coming again. And what they meant by the saying “the Coming of the Son of Man” was the great declaration of the end of history in its present form and the beginning of the new.

The church fathers taught in agreement even on details of the Second Coming event. Great leaders like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Origen, Chrysostom and Augustine, whose lives spanned from the early second century to the fifth century expounded Scripture on the Coming.

A word both in the Bible and taken up by the Fathers is “Parousia” translated as ‘Coming’ or ‘appearing’. It denotes the powerful presence of the Lord Jesus, much more than simply travelling from heaven to earth.

‘Coming’ is used for the first coming and for the presence of Jesus with his people. But each time the church Fathers use it in this more general way they also teach the great manifest presence of Jesus at the end with glory, judgement, the destruction of Antichrist and the inauguration of the new realm of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

For example, Irenaeus, who died in 202, in his ‘Against Heresies’ distinguished the judgement with the destruction of the temple in AD 70 from the final Coming at the end. Justin Martyr who died in 165 AD describes the first Coming for the Cross from the Second or final one with glory and finality. Origen likewise.

Chrysostom in the late fourth century is likewise clear. In Homily 76 on Matthew, he says that Christ's second coming will not be like His first coming. The first: Bethlehem, hidden, humble relatively obscure. The second: open, universal, glorious unmistakable. He will not come secretly. Chrysostom taught; The Deceiver says “Christ is here.” But Christ's actual Parousia will be: “You won't need anybody to tell you.”

So, what is the expectancy and what about those words of warning and encouragement? Be on guard (look out)! Watch (be alert)! and stand firm, as the gospels report.

Indeed, Luke adds *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the **anxieties of life**, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”* Yes just plain daily anxieties must not be allowed to ferment in our minds.

Our Lord is clear and specific. He wants every generation of believers whom he has called to be watchful and to be protected, to be on guard. Yet it will be a surprise. Folk going about their normal lives. Ordinary, good folk minding their own business.

If you are serious about the Kingdom of God, allow these verses to strengthen you. There are three things here, ideas that can distract and allow anxieties to dominate from a sense

of expectancy, an awareness that we are heading for Christ's great Parousia, The Coming. An awareness proper for every generation of believers over the past two thousand years up to now. It is a holy Spirit given awareness.

You and I should ask; is that awareness fresh and motivational in my heart and life? It can be and it should be. Our Lord requests it. There are three things to recognise especially today I believe.

One. The fact that it has been two thousand years and he hasn't appeared. Listen, every generation of believers needs to be expectant. The mockery of dismissal must be rejected. Peter warns against scoffing about the seeming delayⁱⁱ. We must not be the mockers. Not even passive mockers. Jesus said that he has given us the secrets of the Kingdom. We must cherish those truths and let no one take our crownⁱⁱⁱ.

There is one small statement from the lips of Jesus himself that helps solve the problem of delay. Jesus said *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*

This event is of such magnitude that it is secret in the heart of the Father. He who planned from eternity the communion of humans and desired the whole earth be filled with offspring. This event is the complete end of the first great phase of Creation. He is holding back the end, desiring none to be lost but all to come to repentance and be saved for the new Creation.^{iv}

Only the Father knows, not even the Son to whom the Father shares all things. But this is a massive global enterprise highlighting the eternal importance of faith and mercy on all. Multiply. Defeat Satan.

Second, watch out, be on guard warns Jesus about deceivers: False religion is idolatry. Mohammadanism is false. Hinduism is false. Buddhism is false. Marxism is false. Darwinism is false. These are all false in their posturing as ultimate meaning and authorities on what and who is sovereign over all life. Jesus is the true Christ, the Son of God. God's Creation work will culminate in his return.

Third, is the place of Israel. The people of this calling and nation will continue until all these things prophesied have happened. They are like a time piece. Could it be that Jesus is pointing out that the existence of this race, even this nation will continue, at times seeming miraculously, until all these things have occurred? Thus, demonstrating his grace toward Israel.

Thus, be expectant. In Mark four times Jesus urges this; 'Look out,' and 'be alert'! The true Bride of Christ in every generation is ready; *'Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready'*^v. How has she done this? She has occupied herself with the deeds and actions of her Lord.

The first Christ believers met on the first day of the week, the day of resurrection, The Lord's Day with anticipation of the Lord's return. So has it been through history until today. They lived in the light of the throne of God every day.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father you have the future of the earth planned, you desire the will and ways of heaven to be done on earth and one day will fulfill that desire. Lead me in your ways. Brighten my mind so that the Coming of Jesus the Christ is of greater joy and anticipation than anything else that occurs on this earth. Let me act, believe and feel part of your great plan for eternity. As the angels and the saints throughout the ages do. That I too might properly honour the Name Jesus and play my part in your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn: *by Isaac Watts*

1. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.
2. To him shall endless prayer be made, and praises throng to crown his head.
His name like sweet perfume shall rise with every morning sacrifice.
3. People and realms of every tongue dwell on his love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on his name.
4. Blessings abound where'er he reigns: the prisoners leap to lose their chains,
the weary find eternal rest, and all who suffer want are blest.
5. Let every creature rise and bring their highest honours to our King,
angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen.

Benediction:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be apparent to all. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

And the God of peace will be with you.

ⁱ Matthew 24.30 and see parallels in Mark and Luke

ⁱⁱ 2Peter 3.3

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 13.11, Revelation 3.11

^{iv} 1Timothy 2.4 and 2Peter 3.9

^v Revelation 19.7,8