

The Return of Jesus

1 Thessalonians 1:10

Take your Bibles and turn to 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

Before Chuck Swindoll became a pastor he worked in a machine shop for about 4 years alongside a guy named George. His job was to sweep and clean out the shavings underneath the huge machines the other men used. George was born again, and he loved the teaching of Scripture on prophecy and end times.

Late one Friday afternoon about ten minutes to quitting time when, Chuck looked at George and said, "George, are you ready?" he said, "Uh-huh." But he was all dirty. He was just obviously not ready. In fact, he looked like he was ready to keep on working. Chuck said, "Aren't you ready to go home?" He said, "Yeah, I'm ready." Chuck replied, "Look at you! Man, you're not ready. You've gotta go clean up." "No," he said, "let me show you something." So he unzipped his coveralls and underneath were the neatest, cleanest clothes you can imagine. He had them all ready. All he did when the whistle blew was just unzip and step out of that coverall, walk up, and punch his clock and he was gone. He said, "You see, I stay ready to keep from gettin' ready – just like I'm ready for Jesus!"¹

That's what I want to talk to you about today. About being ready for the Lord's return. We have been studying 1 Thessalonians and learning what a healthy believer and a strong church looks like. We have seen several qualities in chapter one [read 1 Thess. 1:2-10].

In verse 10 we see three major doctrines mentioned: the return of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and our rescue by Jesus. We will examine each one in time. Today we will only look at the return of Jesus. One of the qualities of a mature believer and a vibrant church is they look forward to and anticipate the Lord's return. To wrap our hearts and minds around this, let's look at some truths about the Lord's return.

¹ Swindoll, Charles R. *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*. 506

1. The return of Jesus is a future event in which Christ returns for His own.

Number one, the return of Jesus is a future event in which Christ returns for His own.

It is often described with the word “rapture.” The word “rapture” does not occur in the English Bible, but the idea is described specifically in two key passages: 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. In those chapters he describes a day when the dead in Christ will be raised and all who are living and know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior will be changed and will meet Christ in the air. The return of Jesus is a future event in which Christ returns for His own.

2. The return of Jesus will happen.

Number two, the return of Jesus will happen. It’s a guaranteed event. It’s certain. It’s definite. It’s a surefire thing. It is one of the most popular subjects in the Bible.

- As a matter of fact, in 1 Thessalonians every chapter ends with a comment about it (1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23).
- In Matthew 24 Jesus teaches about His return extensively.
- In John 14:3 Jesus said, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.”
- At Jesus’ ascension two angels appeared and said in Acts 1:11, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”
- Just about every book in the New Testament mentions it: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 1 & 2 Peter, and James... and the list goes on.

The return of Jesus will happen. Just as Jesus was born, lived, crucified, and was resurrected... He will return again. It’s a guarantee. It’s a sure thing. You can count on it. It will happen.

3. The time of the Lord's return is only known by the Heavenly Father.

Number three, the time of the Lord's return is only known by the Heavenly Father.

While the fact of the second coming is very emphatically and clearly taught in the Bible, the time is not. The Bible makes it clear that we do not know and cannot know the exact time when Jesus will return. Although God has set a definite time, that time has not been revealed. Jesus indicated that neither He nor the angels knew the time of His return, and neither would His disciples. In Mark 13:32 Jesus was talking about His return and said, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (33) Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come." The time of the Lord's return is only known by the Heavenly Father.

Back in 1988 a man published a book called "88 reasons why Jesus will return in 1988." It gained popularity, but he was wrong. No one knows the time when Jesus will return.

4. We are to expect the Lord's return at any moment.

Number four, we are to expect the Lord's return at any moment. Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:10 where the Thessalonians believers are described as "wait[ing] for His Son from heaven." The word "wait" is in the present tense. This means that their hope for the return of Christ was alive. They expected Christ to return at any moment and eagerly looked for Him to come through the skies. Their expectation was a daily expectation. This was not an attitude that said, "Well, He will get here when He gets here." No, no. They were eagerly waiting for Him. We hear this again in 1 Corinthians 1:7 which says, "You do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed." Each generation of believers has the right to expect the Lord to come in their lifetime. We are to expect the Lord's return at any moment.

5. We are waiting for a person, not an event.

Number five, we are waiting for a person, not an event. Look again at 1 Thessalonians 1:10 which reminds us to “wait for His Son from heaven.” There are a lot of wonderful blessings and rewards that we will receive as Christians when He returns. However, our emphasis isn’t on the rewards as much as it is on the Lord Jesus.

It’s like the husband who has been gone a long time. His family has been looking forward to His return because they miss him, love him, and like him. They can’t wait to see him again. However, this longing for the dad’s return can be tainted if the wife, children, brothers, sisters, and friends are only excited about the gifts he is bringing. If your expectation and longing to see Jesus at His return is about seeing Him face to face then you have the right perspective, but if it’s only about the gifts He brings you need to examine your heart to see if you really love the Lord.

The great thing about the Lord’s return is you do get to see Him face to face, but sense He is a loving and generous Lord He also brings many gifts. This takes us to number six.

6. The Lord’s return results in many blessings.

Number six, the Lord’s return results in many blessings. Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:10 again where we are reminded “to wait for his Son from heaven.” Since Jesus is coming from heaven He is bringing gifts from heaven. It’s like the dad who goes to Hawaii on a business trip and brings back gifts from Hawaii for his family. Jesus died, resurrected, ascended to heaven, and will be returning from there. There are many blessings from His return, but I want to mention two.

- **When Jesus returns we will receive a new home.** When Jesus resurrected from the grave He ascended to heaven and some day He will return from heaven. Listen to what Jesus said in John 14:3, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.” When Jesus comes back He will gather His people to take them to a place that has been prepared for them. In this new home called heaven there is no sickness, no sorrow, no sin, no death, no divorce, no abuse, no stress, no pressure, no

worries, and no lies. That's a blessing. When He returns, that blessing comes with Him.

- **When Jesus returns we will receive a new body.** A body that is healthy, strong, that does not get old or get sick. Philippians 3:20 says, "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body." What a blessing!

So when He comes from heaven, He will bring heavenly blessings.

7. The Lord's return should motivate us to serve Him.

Number seven, the Lord's return is motivation for us to serve Him. The early church was not simply sitting around staring at the sky waiting for His return. They were busy serving Him until He returned. Look at the end of 1 Thessalonians 1:9, "They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, (10) and to wait for His Son from heaven." While they were waiting for His return they were serving Him. How are we to serve Him until He returns? By doing whatever His Word tells us. The Bible is His instructions to us on how to serve Him and live for Him until He returns.

Let me give you some specific instructions that are connected directly to the return of the Lord and your service to Him.

- **Number one, serve the Lord by investing your life into the Lord's kingdom.** Jesus tells a story called "The Parable of the Ten Minas [MIN uhs]." A "mina" [MIN uh] was about three months pay. So we are talking about a lot of money. Jesus begins the parable by saying in Luke 19:13, "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. (13) So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'" There is a lot more to this parable, but I want you to see that what the master gave his servants he wanted them to put it to work. The "money" represents all that God gave you in life. Your health, money, mind,

talents, spiritual gifts, and so on. He wants you to put them to work for Him until He returns. He wants you to be a good steward of what He has given you. Serve Him with what you have.

- **Number two, serve the Lord by telling others about Him** (Acts 1:8, 11). The last thing Jesus said before He ascended into heaven was in Acts 1:8, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Jesus wants us to be His witnesses all throughout the world. Immediately after the Lord made that statement He ascended to heaven then angels reminded those watching that He would “come back in the same way” they had seen Him go into heaven. I believe the implication is clear. We are to be about spreading the gospel and making disciples of Christ until He returns.
- **Number three, serve the Lord by encouraging others** (1 Thess. 4:13-18). In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we are given a detailed description of the Lord’s return. At the end of that section we are told, “Encourage each other with these words.” We are to encourage, bless, and remind each other the Lord is going to return some day. Everyone of us needs encouragement. We are all discouraged about something. Knowing that Jesus will someday return and we will get to see Him face to face, be in His perfect presence that allows us to have a new home and a new body is encouraging to a tired soul.
- **Number four, serve the Lord by living a godly life** (Titus 2:12-13). Listen carefully to Titus 2:11, “For the grace of that brings salvation has appeared to all men. (12) It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, (13) while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” While we wait we are to be God-filled, wise, and controlled. Our lives should show that we belong to Him.

Conclusion

As God's people we are to expect the Lord's return and live like He is about to return. We should be looking forward to seeing Him face to face and rejoice with all the blessings that day will bring. However, until He returns we should serve Him, honor Him, and represent Him well in whatever season of life we are in. Be ready for the return of Christ. When He returns, He is coming for you.

However, some of you today are not ready. If He were to return today you would be left behind. I don't say this to scare you, but I do say this to warn you. The only way you can be ready for the Lord's return is to have the Lord in your heart by placing your faith in Him for salvation.