



The Second Advent
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We have been observing a celebration of the first Advent, today we will take a look at what the Bible says about the second Advent.

Just like the way the celebration of the First Advent is fraught with traditions and misinterpretations, the church's understanding of the events surrounding the Second Advent are likewise marred by tradition and misinterpretation of Scripture.

In fact, the Christian world has been sharply divided, for hundreds of years, over questions regarding the future—so much so that we have chosen, at Grace Fellowship, to avoid taking an “official” stance on any specific details of the Second Advent (Second Coming) except those that are universally agreed upon by all Bible-believing, evangelical Christians.

A. What are some of the details over which the church disagrees?

a. The Millennium:

Rev. 20:1-6

¹ “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life (*they lived*) and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those

who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

i. Premillennialism

Is the Millennium (thousand years) something that will happen in the future *after* the resurrection of the dead and *after* all living Christians are caught up to meet Jesus in the air? This is premillennialism: The resurrection and rapture occur BEFORE (or PRE) the Millennium.

ii. Postmillennialism

Is it something that happens (or is happening) *before* the resurrection of the dead and *before* all living Christians are caught up to meet Jesus in the air? This is Postmillennialism: The resurrection and rapture occur AFTER (or POST) the Millennium.

iii. Amillennialism

Or is the Millennium a figurative time (not literally 1,000 years) that symbolizes the current age leading up to the Second Advent? This is Amillennialism: There is no literal Millennium.

It would take months to deal with all of the differences between the varying views—ALL of which have merit.

b. The Rapture.

Your particular view of the Millennium will inform your view of the Rapture (the event whereby the dead in Christ are raised and, along with the living followers of Christ, are caught up in the air to meet Jesus).

i. Premillennial

Premillennial believers expect that they will be raptured and then they will return to *this* earth for 1,000 years.

ii. Amillennial and Postmillennial

Amillennial and Postmillennial believers expect that they will be raptured and then immediately enter our promised eternal home in a new heaven and new earth.

c. The Tribulation.

Again, your particular view of the Millennium will inform your view of the Tribulation (a time of great suffering on the earth perpetrated by Satan and his minions).

i. Premillennial

Premillennial believers expect that the Tribulation will occur in the future and *immediately before* the Millennium.

ii. Amillennial and Postmillennial

Amillennial and Postmillennial believers usually believe that the Tribulation occurred in the past.

All of these subjects are worthy of study but agreement on the specifics of each of these subjects is NOT essential to Christian unity.

B. So what can Bible-believing evangelical Christians agree on about the Second Advent—what MUST we agree on?

I'll point out five points of agreement and correspond them to the beginning letters of the names of the five candles of the Advent Celebration (P, B, A, S, J).

P (prophecy candle)

The Second Advent will be a Personal, Physical Return

B (Bethlehem candle)

The timing of The Second Advent will be Beyond Our Knowledge

A (Angel candle)

We should await the Second Advent with Anticipation

S (Shepherd candle)

The Second Advent will be preceded by specific Signs

J (Jesus candle)

The Second Advent will culminate in Judgment

a. Personal, Physical Return

In some more liberal Christian circles, the personal, physical return of Jesus is denied. They claim that Christ himself will not return, but simply that the spirit of Christ, meaning an acceptance of his teaching and an imitation of his lifestyle of love, would increasingly return to the earth. However, the Bible is very explicit that the return of Jesus will be PERSONAL and PHYSICAL not allegorical.

John 14:1-3

¹ Jesus said “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And 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.”

Acts 1:7-11

⁷Jesus is gathered with his disciples some 40 days after his resurrection “He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.⁸ But 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.”

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “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.”

1 Thess. 4:16

¹⁶ Paul says, “**For the Lord himself will come down from heaven**, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Again, the Bible is very explicit that the return of Jesus will be PERSONAL and PHYSICAL not allegorical.

b. Timing is **Beyond** Our Knowledge

Throughout the centuries, there have been numerous attempts to predict the exact day of the Lord’s Second Advent—each of which has failed to come true.

- i. William Miller, founder of the Seventh Day Adventists predicted the Second Advent would occur on March 21, 1844. When this date passed a new date was predicted, April 18, 1844. Again the date passed and another Millerite, Samuel S. Snow, derived the date of October 22, 1844.
- ii. Charles Taze Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Society, calculated 1874 as the year of Christ's Second Coming. J.F. Rutherford, who succeeded Russell as president of the Watch Tower Society, predicted that the Millennium would begin in 1925.

- iii. Certain Anabaptists of the early sixteenth century believed that the Millennium would occur in 1533.
- iv. During World War I, *The Weekly Evangel*, an official publication of the Assemblies of God, carried this prediction: "We are not yet in the Armageddon struggle proper, but at its commencement, and it may be, if students of prophecy read the signs aright, that Christ will come before the present war closes, and before Armageddon...The war preliminary to Armageddon, it seems, has commenced." [7] Other editions speculated that the end would come no later than 1934 or 1935.
- v. The founder of the Calvary Chapel system, Chuck Smith, predicted that the Lord would come back before 1981.
- vi. Popular pastor, Hal Lindsey claimed that Christians should not plan to still be on earth by the year 2000.
- vii. Edgar Whisenant gave us the book, *88 reasons Why The Rapture Will Be in 1988*

But Scripture states that Jesus will come like a thief.

2 Peter 3:10

¹⁰ "But the day of the Lord **will come like a thief**. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare."

1 Thess. 5:2

² "for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night"

Thieves don't announce the day they are coming to break into your house and steal your possessions. They come without warning and totally unexpected. The Second Advent will also be without warning and totally unexpected. Why do so many falsely predict the Second Advent? Because they try to read the Signs (more on that later).

- c. We should look **forward** to the Second Advent with eager Anticipation
John's response at the end of Revelation should characterize Christians' hearts in all ages

Rev. 22:20

²⁰ "Amen, Come, Lord Jesus!"

True Christianity trains us to

Titus 2:12-13

¹² “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 appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”

Do we in fact eagerly long for Christ’s return? The more Christians are caught up in enjoying the good things of this life, and the more they neglect genuine Christian fellowship and their personal relationship with Christ, the less they will long for his return. On the other hand, many Christians who are experiencing suffering or persecution, or who are sick, and those whose daily walk with Christ is vital and deep, will have a more intense longing for his return. Perhaps we can gauge our own spiritual condition by the degree to which we long for the return of Christ. We should, by all means, make wise choices about our future (investments, education, missions, long-range plans) with the sober understanding that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief, but we should take care not to fall in love with this world and with this life.

d. The Second Advent will be preceded by specific **Signs**

We saw in the third point, that the exact time of the Second Advent is beyond our knowledge, but many Christians, over the centuries, have attempted to predict the Second Coming. Why? Just as the Bible is clear that the Second Advent will come like a thief in the night, there are several passages in the Bible that seem to point to specific events that must occur before the return of the Lord. The apocalyptic passages in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 list a number of signs which will precede the “Son of Man coming in clouds”

- i. The Preaching of the Gospel to All Nations
- ii. The Great Tribulation (wars, earthquakes, famine)
- iii. False Christs and False Prophets Working Signs and Wonders
- iv. Signs in the Heavens: the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven
- v. The Coming of the Man of Sin and the Rebellion:

2 Thess. 2:1-4

¹ “Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of

mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

vi. The Salvation of Israel

Rom. 11:25-26

²⁵ "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶ and in this way all Israel will be saved."

It would appear that these events have not yet happened. The impact of these passages has led many Christians (including prominent Reformed theologians like Louis Berkhof) to deny that Jesus could return at any moment—instead, since these signs seem to be yet unfulfilled, Jesus' return must be delayed until these signs occur.

i. Premillennial solutions

One major solution to this problem that many who understand the Millennium as a future event offer is to separate Christ's SECRET return (where he comes FOR his saints—this could happen at any time) from his PUBLIC return (where he comes WITH his saints—this can only happen after the signs such as the Tribulation, the Man of Lawlessness, etc.). Although this is the prevailing view in the evangelical church today, it is VERY difficult to derive two separate comings of Christ from the passages that predict his return.

ii. Amillennial and Postmillennial solutions

Another major solution is the say that all of the signs have been fulfilled and therefore Christ in fact could return at any moment. Many if not most of those who hold a Post-Millennial or Amillennial view would take this view. How can they say that these signs have already been fulfilled?

- a. They interpret the “Son of Man Coming in the Clouds” in the same way that Daniel does

Dan. 7:13

¹³ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.”

In his vision, Daniel saw the Son of Man coming in the clouds to the throne of God, not to the earth. Therefore, they would interpret Jesus words in the exact same way. The Son of Man would come in the clouds not to the earth (the Second Coming) but to the throne of God in judgment against Israel in the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70.

- b. All of the signs would have been signs that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem and so the Second Coming of Jesus could happen at any time.

This is where, if we’re not careful, we could divide needlessly over the minutiae of how to interpret the signs. Two distinct understandings of how to interpret the signs is represented on your Leadership Team yet we make no judgments as to each other’s commitment to the truth of the Bible or to each other’s commitment to Christ.

- e. The Second Advent will culminate in **Judgment**

The First Advent ushered in an era of hope and opportunity for the people of Israel as well as for the nations. It culminated in God pouring out his wrath on his own Son so that those who place their trust in Him would be protected from God’s wrath. However, the Second Advent will culminate in God pouring out his wrath on those who don’t know God and who don’t place their trust in the Lord Jesus. They will receive no protection from God’s wrath. Listen to Paul’s words

2 Thess. 1:3-10

³“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. ⁴Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

⁵All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶God is just: He will

pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might ¹⁰ on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.”

So what does this all mean? What should we take away? Remember

2 Peter 3:10-14

¹⁰“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Peter’s words show us what lives of holiness, godliness and hopeful expectation look like as we wait and prepare for Jesus’ return:

- i. We will live as if we believe Jesus is, in fact, returning.
In the same way that we have made thoughtful, intentional preparations for Christmas because we knew and believed it was an actual day that was actually coming, we are to live lives of thoughtful, intentional preparation for the actual day that Jesus will actually return. (Matthew 24:42-44)
- ii. We will be faithful and wise stewards of everything that has been entrusted to us by God, understanding that all of it—whether possession, ability, talent or **gifting** – actually belongs to Him and exists for His glory. (Matthew 24:45-51; 25:14-30)
- iii. We will have hearts that have been tended and prepared for His coming by being full of faith, love, worship and overwhelming

delight in Jesus. We will fight and flee from sin and do all that is needed to be found faithful to our first love. (Matthew 25:1-13)

- iv. We will love and care for those who are poor, weak, cast out and in need.

True disciples of Jesus cannot and will not ignore the plight of the least of these. We will serve, love, give, go and pray for those in need of food, drink, clothing, friendship and comfort. (Matthew 25:31-46)

- v. We will love the nations and proclaim the gospel both far and near.

As the church family, we are the vessel appointed by God to herald the gospel in all the world through both word and action. (Matthew 24:14)