

## **6 Jesus**

**The Second  
Coming**

**The Greatest  
Rescue?**

“ Our brains are no longer conditioned for reverence and awe. We cannot imagine a Second Coming that would not be cut down to size by the televised evening news, or a Last Judgment not subject to pages of holier-than-thou second-guessing in *The New York Review of Books*.

John Updike (b.1932)—

American writer

## Questions

*How do I think the world will end?*

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*What do I think about Jesus' second coming? Is it something I believe in?*

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The end of the world is nigh! Judgment day is coming! The end of the world is at hand! That's right, we have been hearing this call for hundreds if not thousands of years. And still, here we are, sitting tight and as good as gold, not a thing to worry about! Or is there?

It seems to be a growing belief that the world is under the constant threat of ending. For years we have been living under the threat of a nuclear disaster and political and religious wars, but in the last hundred years a whole lot of other potential threats have appeared. Suddenly we are worrying about global warming, environmental disasters, shortage of energy resources, over population, genetic and viral epidemics, lack of water and the threat of meteors.

***For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message that God gave to the world at the proper time.***

1 Timothy 2: 5, 6

If even one of these things happens in a big way, it seems that the end of the world is a real possibility! No wonder there are so many movies about how the world will end! It seems we all want a hero to rescue us! But is this a believable reality? Could the Christian belief of the end of the world and the greatest rescue plan be true?

But hold on, if a loving God created this earth and all of us who are on it, why would He let it self-destruct?

It's a belief among many Christians that, contrary to the popular scientific view of origins, our world was created as a wonderful, beautiful place without suffering, disease, hatred, war, and death. But, because humanity was given free choice, and then abused that free choice, all these bad things arose. We can see this principle every day by simply looking at how people, even now, abuse their free choice and make decisions that bring pain and suffering upon themselves and others.

The "great rescue plan" is a foundational Christian belief; that Jesus came and died in order one day to erase all these bad things. He came and died so that all these things will one day be gone, and the earth will be restored to what it once was.

The consequences of all of our wrong choices, of our lies, our greed, our jealousy, our racism, our prejudice, (anything that we might have done to hurt others), has all been paid on our behalf. Sure, we currently have to reap the immediate consequences of our actions, but as far as God is concerned, through Jesus, our debt has been paid.

## Questions

*What would I feel toward someone who volunteered to pay all of my debts?*

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*What would it feel like to be debt free?*

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But if They knew that the world was going to go wrong, why create it in the first place?

Well, by giving all of His created beings the power of choice, God knew He was taking a risk. He knew that something could go wrong and so He had a back-up plan. The great rescue plan was His, and our, insurance.

God  
knew he  
was  
taking a  
risk

By making sure that there was a way to counteract any evil that may appear in His creation, God really gave the world its first super hero!

But what does Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins have to do with the Second Coming? How does this great rescue plan save us from this time-bomb we seem to be living on?

A lot. Let's have a look at a wonderful quote from the Bible:

***Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in Me. There are many rooms in My Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me where I am.***

John 14:1-3

Do you know any Christians? Do you know people who seem to believe in Him and try to follow His guidelines and principles? I don't know if you have ever noticed something about them, but they're just like everyone else—they die! For all their vaunted faith in Jesus and all their talk about a future hope, they die and when they die they are put in the ground and they rot right along with the worst sinners.

As things stand now, whatever immediate temporal and practical advantages their faith gives them, and there are many, when all is said and done—puff! They die just as everyone else does, and they wind up in the same place as everyone else.

So what does their faith ultimately do for them if their end is no different from anyone else's? How are they rescued?

What's different about their experience is the Second Coming of Jesus—or as I like to call it—the great rescue. According to the Bible, those who have died believing in Jesus, who are “asleep” believing in Jesus (a common term in the Bible to describe death, and what death is like) will be restored to a new life in a world in which there is no more pain, suffering, or death. Until then, their fate is no different from anyone else's, at least as far as death is concerned (contrary to popular belief, the Bible doesn't teach that the dead immediately go off to heaven or to hell).

Then if anyone tells you,  
 “Look, here is the  
 Messiah,” or “There He  
 is,” don't pay any  
 attention. For false  
 messiahs and false  
 prophets will rise up and  
 perform great miraculous  
 signs and wonders so as  
 to deceive, if possible,  
 even God's chosen ones.  
 See, I have warned you.

So if someone tells you,  
 “Look, the Messiah is  
 out in the desert,” don't  
 bother to go and  
 look. Or, “Look, He is  
 hiding here,” don't  
 believe it! For as the  
 lightning lights up the

But at the Second Coming, the  
 promises made to us through the life and  
 death of Jesus will be fulfilled. It's at the  
 Second Coming that everything Jesus  
 accomplished for us, when He was first  
 here on earth, is fully and finally realised.  
 It's at the Second Coming when the  
 promise of eternal life is entirely fulfilled;  
 it's at the Second Coming that the greatest  
 promises in the Bible are able to be seen.

Let's look at some Bible quotes  
 regarding the Second Coming of Jesus.  
 Think about what they are describing;  
 think about the nature of the events  
 they are depicting:

***Then everyone will  
 see the Son of Man  
 arrive on the clouds  
 with great power  
 and glory.*** Mark 13:26

entire sky, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. And then at last,  
 the sign of the coming of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens,  
 and there will be deep mourning among all the nations of the earth.  
 And they will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds of heaven with  
 power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with the  
 sound of a mighty trumpet blast, and they will gather together His  
 chosen ones from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

Matt 24: 23-27, 30-31

And now, brothers and sisters, I want you to know what will happen to the Christians who have died so you will not be full of sorrow like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus comes, God will bring back with Jesus all the Christians who have died.

I can tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet Him ahead of those who are in their graves. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with Him forever.

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-17

This is pretty intense, isn't it? There's so much to try and imagine. In fact these quotes sound as far-fetched as a variety of movies out there. It might be entertaining and the thought may even get our pulse racing faster than the last time we ran to the bus, but is it realistic? Is the end of the world something that will happen? The Bible clearly states that it is:

***Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him.*** Revelation 1:7

Wow! There's so much in these texts, so much that who can even begin to comprehend the events depicted? (And if you're interested in looking into these events even further—we have hardly touched the surface— please refer to the further resources section at the end of this chapter). But if you put them together you'll notice that the Second Coming of Jesus isn't some secret event. It is not a quiet thing which happens and the only evidence you have is that a group of people are missing afterwards. No, it's clear that the Second Coming of Jesus is a world-wide event, open to the view of everyone, an event that leads to the end of this world and the beginning of a new one. In short it is the greatest rescue!

It's also the event that leads to the resurrection of the dead; it's the event that makes the big difference between those people, both dead and alive, who have lived their lives based on love and those who haven't. Making the greatest rescue even MORE wonderful!

the  
second  
coming  
is a  
world-  
wide  
event

## **Question**

*What is the most amazing rescue you have seen or heard about?*

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Now even if we choose to believe in the Second Coming, we don't actually know when it's going to happen. But Jesus did give us something to work with, He warned that before He came back, the world would go through immense suffering; there would be wars, rumours of war, earthquakes, famines, pestilences; there would be a moral breakdown. The family unit would be under threat. And we can see this all around us today. At the same time, too, Jesus said:

***However, no one knows the day or the hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son Himself. Only the Father knows.***

Matthew 24:36

But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed.

It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For

when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be

raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be

transformed so that we will never die. For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die. When this happens—when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die—then at last the Scriptures will come true: Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

1 Corinthians 15:51-55

So we know that He is coming, we know we're going to get rescued, we just don't know when.

In one sense, we can answer that it doesn't matter when He comes back; the important thing is that He has promised to. Whether it happens in our lifetime or in a thousand years, what matters is how we live now, what matters is what the promise of the Second Coming means to us *now*. Because if you believe what the Bible teaches, that death is a sleep and that we sleep in the grave until the resurrection of Jesus, then for each of us the Second Coming can, at least as far as we personally experience, be no further off than our individual deaths.

A fair question, however, is, “How can I be sure that the Second Coming will really happen?” After all, these are all wonderful promises. But why should anyone believe in them?

The greatest assurance is the first coming of Jesus. Jesus was here, died, and is now gone. In one sense, what did it accomplish? We still live, suffer, and die. What ultimate good did it do, at least as things stand now?

None, unless the Second Coming happens. In a real sense, the whole purpose of the first coming was to make the second possible. The Bible says that Jesus paid a ransom for our souls. That ransom was His life, given for us on the cross. Why pay a ransom and not come and get what you paid for? And that’s what the Second Coming is: Jesus getting what He paid for with His life.

As sure as we can believe that the first coming of Jesus happened, we can have assurance of the Second.

But how does it affect my life now? How does this great plan rescue me from my life now? How does it “fix” the gaps in my life?

Firstly, it tells us that death does not have to be the end. And for those of us who have lost people we adore, that we miss intensely, that is a great comfort. If it wasn’t for Jesus’ Second Coming, death would steamroll over everything; its pain would last forever. But, now, now even in the face of death, even with the pain and suffering that death causes, we don’t have to be scared by it. We can know that Jesus has beaten death, and the pain we experience is only temporary.

Now, there have been all sorts of books and movies and scientific speculation about how the world is going to end, and even how the *universe* is going to end. But of course, none of it foretells anything good for us. The prize-winning author Paul Davies, in his book, *The Last Three Minutes*, gives one scenario:

“The universe, currently aglow with the prolific energy of nuclear power, will eventually exhaust this valuable resource. The era of light will be over forever.”

That's one view. Thanks, though, to the promises of the Second Coming, of the great rescue plan, we have an alternative. Talking about our new world, the Bible says:

***And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light.*** Revelation 21: 23

Thus, the Second Coming means that you can live right now knowing how it's all going to end, knowing that there's hope, a promise, that there's something beyond this life now. In a real sense, the Second Coming creates a bridge between this world and the next. It tells us that this world, as it now exists, won't go on forever; the good news, however, is that instead of this world ending in oblivion, it will be recreated into the paradise it was always meant to be.

So many people destroy themselves with sex, drugs, alcohol, the mindless pursuit of pleasure, thinking—why not, there's nothing else, this is all there is, so why not party hard?

There was a popular song a few years ago in which a woman sang something to the effect of, "I just want to have a little fun before I die." If this is all there is, why not? If there is nothing beyond death, I completely agree. But what if there *is* something beyond death? The Second Coming tells us that this is not all there is, that we can have a hope in something else, something so much better.

If you read about the Second Coming in the Bible, it's pretty clear that there's a reckoning at the end of the world, a kind of judgment. Not like the movie "Judgment Day", but a different kind of judgment. The Second Coming tells us that justice will be handed out here on earth. Imagine that! Think about all the injustices you have ever seen or heard of and imagine them being 'righted'. In a real way, the Second Coming is God's way of saying to us, "Yes, how you live matters to me". The Second Coming tells us, then, that we have a moral obligation to live right, that we need to get our lives in order. In short, it's a very clear reminder that we live in a moral universe with a moral God who will one day judge the world. Most of us need a little reminder of that once and a while.

we have  
a moral  
obligation  
to live  
right

“The Bible promises us that Jesus will return to take His faithful followers with Him to live with Him in His glorious presence forever. Everyone else will be left behind to face God's wrath and judgment. If Jesus were to return today, do you know if He would take you with Him to heaven?”

Billy Graham (b.1918)  
—Prominent Christian preacher and author

Another important immediate consequence of the Second Coming is that it can help us set our priorities straight. Let's put it this way, if we knew we were going to be awarded punishment or affirmation according to our actions at the end of today, how would we act? Would we all of a sudden see our priorities and behaviour more clearly? Would we see more plainly the things in life that really matter, and the things that don't?

*Now this doesn't mean that Christians run around living in fear, completely paranoid and terrified of the end of time. This judgment day, this second coming, is a reason to live with hope because it signifies an end to our suffering, an end to our pointlessness. This event is the hope that Christians cling to in their darkest hours, it sees them through their most terrifying storms. It is their lifeline.*

“  
In my end is my  
beginning.”

Jean de la Fontaine  
(1621-1695)  
—French Poet

If we really believe in the promise of the Second Coming, we can suddenly find a lot more purpose in our lives simply by having the grand desire to share this good news with others. Believing in the promise of the Second Coming can really give us a sense of purpose, of mission, of meaning in life. So many of us struggle with a total sense of an empty, meaningless life because we feel we're adrift in a purposeless universe. The promise of the Second Coming creates a bridge over that gap, that emptiness; it tells us something radically different, and if we believe it's true we can't help but have our life changed because, among other things, we really have something important to say. We know someone is up there waiting to rescue us.

Yes, we can be sure Jesus is coming back to retrieve us. He is getting ready to undertake the greatest rescue and be our greatest hero.

## **Question**

*How would it feel to be rescued from death?*

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## ***My Answers***

*How do I think the world will end?*

I believe it will end with Jesus' coming, but some of my friends believe it will end with the end of the earth's resources.

**Your Answer**

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*What do I think about Jesus' second coming? Is it something I believe in?*

Yes I believe in it, but I feel that people focus too much on it and not on living the life that the Christian message promotes.

**Your Answer**

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*What would I feel toward someone who volunteered to pay all of my debts?*

I would be so thankful, I would be stunned that someone would put themselves out for my actions and responsibilities.

**Your Answer**

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*What would it feel like to be debt free?*

A huge blanket of stress would be lifted off me and taken out of my life! I would feel so relaxed!

**Your Answer**

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*What is the most amazing rescue you have seen or heard about?*

It's always the rescues of people trapped under buildings that capture my attention. The rescuers work ceaselessly and don't want to give up. And the people rescued constantly tap or call up to someone they can't see, they just keep believing that someone is there. Even when they get tired and weak they still call out. It always surprises me that people can survive such deadly situations.

**Your Answer**

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my answers

*How would it feel to be rescued from death?*

I don't know, I imagine it would be surreal, totally consuming and humbling.

**Your Answer**

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my answers

## **Further Resources**

### **Jesus Face To Face**

*Mark Finley and Steven Mosley*  
Pacific Press Publishing Association

### **Jesus For A New Millennium**

*Ken Wade*  
Pacific Press Publishing Association  
Copyright: 1999

### **We Celebrate Jesus: His Return**

*It Is Written*  
Distributed by Chapel Music

### **Second Coming Of Jesus, The**

*M. R. Dehaan*  
Kregel Publishers  
Copyright:1997

### **Return Of Jesus In Early Christianity, The**

*John Carroll*  
Hendrickson Publishers  
Copyright: 2000

## Second Coming, The

*John F Macarthur*

Good News/Crossway USE

Copyright: 2003

## Jesus is Coming: God's Hope for a Restless World

*W. E. Blackstone, William E. Blackstone*

Kregel Publications

Copyright: 1990